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**THE
20
BEST-
DRESSED
MEN**

**AND WHAT
YOU CAN
LEARN FROM
THEM**

Starring

**RYAN
GOSLING**

And Other
Masters
of the Game

**R&B
AND
T&A**

**HOW STRIP
CLUBS
BECAME THE
NEW MUSIC
STUDIO**

**THE
GREATER
OUTDOORS**
HOW TO
FIRE UP
YOUR
SUMMER

+

**THE UBER
OF WEED
IS COMING**





DOLCE & GABBANA

light blue





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Where to buy it
Where are the items from page 11 to page 87 available? Go to GQ.com/go/fashiondirectories to find out. All prices quoted are approximate and subject to change.

**THE HEAD SAYS
YES.
*THE HEART SAYS
DEFINITELY, YES.***



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MASERATI

Ghibli

● *The ever expanding GQ universe makes a mark all month long. We've got the most impactful moments, distilled.*

Prom Kings of the World, Unite!

→ We loved all the photos you Instagrammed, Snapchatted, and tweeted our way on prom night. Here are a couple of our favorites. Keep 'em coming, dapper dudes of America. (Not just prom pics; any of your most stylish pics: a summer wedding, a winter wedding, your wedding, your cousin's bris, your beach bod, your #dadbod—but not your dad's bod.)



That's What She Said

→ Lady person Julieanne Smolinski, she of the unrivaled Twitter handle @BoobsRadley, tackles elephant-in-the-room relationship questions in her column, "What She Said." Topics include "Women Want You to Stop Worrying About Your Beach Body" and "In Defense of a Sex Drought." (Guess which story the above image accompanies.) Read more at GQ.com.



Not Everyone Was Sad to See David Letterman Go...

→ To commemorate the end of Letterman's tenure as the godfather of late-night television, in our May issue we asked comedians to tell us about their favorite moments from his run. Some comedy greats said their good-byes, but some of our readers said good riddance:

- "I hate David Liberal Letterman. Can't stand him."
—Alyce Weber via Facebook
- "Letterman. Meh."
—Andronicus via GQ.com
- "My favorite Letterman moment was the one where he announced his retirement."
—@Punatik via Twitter
- "Who cares? Letterman's a douchebag liberal."
—Steve Smith via Facebook



Sorbet-gate: A Time Line

→ Our May issue included a profile of gaffe-prone CNN anchor Don Lemon by Taffy Brodesser-Akner. The story opens with Lemon and Brodesser-Akner ordering dessert. "It's pronounced sorbette," Lemon tells the author when she asks for sor-bay. A waiter corrects Lemon, and we move on. OR DO WE?

April 21, 6 a.m.

The profile goes live on GQ.com. Twitter explodes as readers grapple with the big question: Sor-bay or sor-bette?

April 21, 1:30 p.m.

Lemon tweets a link to a definition of *sorbet* showing that multiple pronunciations are acceptable.

April 21, 2:30 p.m.

Twitter users are dumbfounded. "Who else had a brief moment of horror that they'd been pronouncing sorbet wrong their whole lives?" tweeted GMPaiella. Lots of us, apparently.

April 22, 11:00 a.m.

Lemon stops by *The View*; debates the matter at length; feeds Whoopi Goldberg lemon sorbet for the win.

April 22, 11:01 a.m.

We buy a pint of Ben & Jerry's, because screw sorbet, no matter how you pronounce it.

Yes, We See the Resemblance

→ After we published our June issue, featuring Chris Pratt on the cover, some readers pointed out that Pratt looked unexpectedly ruddy. Not as in: "having a healthy red color on one's face." As in: *Hey, that dude looks a lot like Paul Rudd.* (For those who can't tell, that's Pratt on the left and Rudd, on our August 2010 cover, on the



right.) BuzzFeed did a whole post about it—BuzzFeed does whole posts about lots of things you wouldn't think could sustain a whole post—in which it cited the results of a Google Image search for "Chris



Pratt on beach" that yielded at least one photo of...Paul Rudd. To all this eager fascination about the surprising likeness of funny, recently chiseled Caucasian male actors, we can only respond: Huh. How about that.

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This automatic chronograph is crafted out of resistant materials like the "diamond-like-carbon" (DLC) used for the coating of the steel case and the innovative Montblanc Extreme leather that produces a highly durable strap, capable of withstanding the rigours of urban life to make the watch a true lifetime companion. Visit and shop Montblanc.com





NAUTICA

1 of 6 ➞

Manual

Look Sharp | Live Smart

Rivers, Lakes &
Mountains Edition



GQ
Endorses

The Brother Nature Look

➞ Think summer and you think beach. Which means you're missing out on the rest of the country: cabins in the woods, swimming holes, and hiking trails with no cell service. This summer we want to celebrate these great American places—along with the great American (and American-influenced) designers who have created a new camp-inspired look. It's part mountain man, part modern nomad, and equally at home on the sidewalk as it is on the trail. So tie on a bandanna (we'll show you how), Airbnb a cabin (we know just where to rent), and lace up a new pair of hiking boots. They'll look better with some trail dust.—JIM MOORE

Jacket, \$1,660, sweater, \$525, polo shirt, \$530, and shorts, \$350, by Michael Bastian. Belt by Gap. Watch by Timex. Bracelets by Miansai. Bandanna by Hav-A-Hank. Where to buy it? Go to GQ.com/go/fashiondirectories



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vapor-distilled water, **inspired by the clouds.**
drinksmartwater.com

sip

focus

take two



**up
up
up**



M

2 of 6 ➔

Rivers, Lakes & Mountains



BACK TO
NATURE
»RIVER

Ride the
Rapids at
Columbia
River Gorge,
Washington

• The river that separates Washington and Oregon looks out on America's addictive Pacific Northwest: skyscraping mountain ranges, glistening rocks, rolling grasslands. But it's also one of the best white-water-rafting

locations in the world, and close enough to Portland that day trips aren't just possible, they're encouraged. You'll want to rent in White Salmon, Washington—and book your rafting

trip in advance—but once you arrive, consider the whole border (and all its state parks) your playground. —MARK BYRNE

Always Be Prepared...to Rock Out >Six Necessities for Cabin Life

1. Now Hear This Ignore your e-mails, but do not ignore your need for jams. The UE Megaboom Bluetooth speaker takes what we love about its smaller sibling—big sound, splashproof package—and upsizes it so the whole cabin can hear Father John Misty. \$300, ultimateears.com

4. Stay Out of the Swamp A day of hiking means a small swimming pool in your boxer briefs. Fight back with Anthony's No Sweat Body Defense—it goes on as a lotion (thanks, cooling aloe vera) but absorbs jock swamp like a powder. \$20, anthony.com

2. Sharpen Up You're not gonna fight off a bear with the new Shinola x Benchmade Custom 485 Valet pocket knife. But you'll whittle a damn good marshmallow-roasting stick. \$200, shinola.com

5. Just Say No to Sanka If you believe in the sanctity of a proper cup of coffee, don't rely on a backwoods mom-and-pop store to stock your favorite roast—BYO beans. In particular, bring along one of the limited-release heirloom roasts from the java connoisseurs at Verve in Santa Cruz, California. vervecoffee.roasters.com

3. Backpack That Thing Up Leave the duffel behind. A leather-accented pack like this one from Polo Ralph Lauren looks good enough to function as your carry-everything carry-on, then does double duty hauling trail necessities: a water bottle, artisanal gorp, sunscreen, and a one-hitter. \$350, ralphlauren.com

6. Look Alive Mother Nature's an introvert. Scope out her secrets—that pileated woodpecker, the couple dry-humping in a canoe—with these Nikon Monarch 7 8×30 binoculars. \$377, bandh.com

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



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ANNIVERSARY

S A L E



RAG & BONE

M

3 of 6 ➔

Rivers, Lakes & Mountains

5 Steps to Nailing the Brother Nature Look

1. Scrap the NASA-approved gear. It's the woods, not Mars. Opt for stuff you'd actually find in nature: cotton, wool, leather.
2. Layer up. You'll warm up while wandering; you'll cool off when the sun drops. Stash extra layers, or just tie that button-front shirt to your waist.
3. Ragg socks look rustic, *and* they help prevent blisters, even if you haven't broken in your boots.
4. Bring a blanket. Better yet, bring a Pendleton waxed-cotton-backed blanket.
5. Acceptable accessories: a hat, a thin necklace, stubble, a canoe.

Vest, \$165, by Denim & Supply Ralph Lauren. Shirt (around waist), \$185, by Polo Ralph Lauren. T-shirt, \$315, by Visvim. Khakis, \$138, by AG. Boots, \$150, by Danner. Socks by Anonymous Ism. Cap and blanket by Pendleton Woolen Mills. Necklace by Bing Bang. Where to buy it? Go to GQ.com/go/fashiondirectories



FAQ

What's the Best "Thanks for Letting Me Stay at Your Vacation Home" Gift?

As with most things, the answer is booze. It's the universal currency when you're welcomed into another person's vacation home, whether he's a close friend, a distant relative, or a vaguely hospitable frenemy. You bring wine for dinner, but for two or more nights under someone else's roof (especially if it's free), you bring booze. Hard stuff. Whiskey, like High West's smoky Campfire. Maybe a quality American gin, like Green Hat. Something *you* would be excited to drink. If the booze is local—either to where you're coming from or to where you're going to—all the better. Host is a teetotaler? Well, bring tea.—M.B.



A black and white close-up portrait of a man with a short beard and intense gaze, looking slightly to the right. He is wearing a white dress shirt with a dark tie. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows on his face and shirt.

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M

4 of 6 ➡

Rivers, Lakes & Mountains



David Chang's Kitchen

How to Cook for a Full (Rental) House

→ I have one rule about cooking on vacation: If it can't be made in one pot, I don't make it at all. This is the closest I get to being a dump-and-stir Food Network chef. I like to cook for friends and family, but if I'm coming back from a day chasing brown trout, it has to be simple. I aim to minimize prep and prepare enough food to last for dinner and breakfast. There are two dishes I turn to: a simple chicken soup and this recipe for *bo ssām*, Mexican-style.

Both are one-pot meals that maximize flavor and leave little mess. The only fancy, deluxe-shit gesture you might see from me is serving the food on actual plates. But that would be a matter of last resort. I hate doing dishes.

Bo Ssām, Mexican-Style

Serves eight to ten

- 5 lbs. pork butt (a.k.a. Boston butt or pork shoulder)
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup kosher salt
- 5 Tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 can chipotle peppers
- 20 tortillas

Directions

- 1> The night before, put the pork in a large roasting pan. (A disposable one works fine.) In a bowl, mix the granulated sugar and salt, then rub the mixture onto the meat. Cover the pan with plastic wrap and put it in the fridge.
- 2> The next day, about seven hours before you want

to eat, heat the oven to 300 degrees. Pull out the pork, unwrap it, and discard any juices in the pan. Wrap the pork in foil and cook for six hours, basting with pan juices each hour.

- 3> When the pork is tender and pulls apart easily with a fork, remove it from the oven, pull off the foil, and raise the oven's temp to 500.
- 4> Put the pan juices into a blender with the brown sugar and peppers, and puree. Spoon this mixture over the pork. Place the shoulder back in the oven for ten minutes, or until a dark caramel crust develops.
- 5> Serve the *bo ssām* whole, letting everyone fork chunks into the tortillas.

The Goods > A Little Camp Goes a Long Way

Do Not Kick the Bucket

• The sun acts all friendly, but it's not your friend. The aviators are self-explanatory (and work on everyone); the denim bucket hat keeps your ears from getting cooked and looks as chill as you'll feel after drinking a sixer on the deck.

Hat, \$50, and T-shirt, \$50, by Polo Ralph Lauren. Cardigan, \$198, by Denim & Supply Ralph Lauren. Sunglasses by Randolph Eyewear. Bead necklace by Deggs & Sal. Bracelets by Del Toro (red) and Miansai.

It's Hike O'Clock Somewhere

• Utilitarian doesn't mean drab. The ruggedness of a great field watch comes in handy in the woods and, when paired with a bright band and some equally punchy wristwear, brings some brawn to your citified weekday style.

Watch, \$125, by Nautica. Silver bracelet by David Yurman. Other bracelets by Miansai. Shirt by Ovadia & Sons. Thermal shirt by J.Crew. Shorts by Michael Bastian.

Boots with a Sneaker Soul

• Whether you're roaming upriver or hustling to the subway, you want hikers like these from Danner—lightweight and mountain-ready, but with buttery suede and retro style.

Boots, \$150, by Danner. Where to buy it? Go to GQ.com/go/fashiondirectories

Three key pieces that'll bring just a touch o' woodsman to your usual style



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©2014 Anheuser-Busch, Michelob Ultra® Light Beer, St. Louis, MO 95 calories, 2.6g carbs, 0.6g protein and 0.0g fat, per 12 oz.

M

5 of 6 ➡

Rivers, Lakes & Mountains

Style Hike
 >Teach Your Closet to Speak Cabin

➔ You don't need a new wardrobe to go from Starbucks in the city to stargazing in the country. "What you want is comfort and necessity," says Alex Drexler, the man behind one of our favorite new clothing lines, Alex Mill. It's stocked with lived-in basics that work in both worlds, like striped tees and broken-in chambray. In the woods, wear them loose and don't be afraid of a little dirt. Because when you take your girl on a rustic weekend, she expects a mountain man, not a prissy one. —MARK ANTHONY GREEN

Shirt, \$155, and crewneck, \$145, by Alex Mill. Shorts, \$350, by Michael Bastian. Boots, \$820, by Off-White c/o Virgil Abloh. Socks by Wigwam. Hat by Otto. Backpack by Patagonia. Belt by John Varvatos Star USA. Bracelets by Deggs & Sal (blue) and David Yurman. Where to buy it? Go to GQ.com/go/fashiondirectories



Your Next Move > The Incredible Transformable Bandanna



The Band
 Beloved by Frank Ocean and your favorite sushi chef.



The Do-Rag
 Handy for keeping a windblown mane in check.



The Neckertie
 Because it's damn fun to say "neckertie."



The Tupac
 Best left to those in hologram form.



BACK TO NATURE
 »MOUNTAIN

Go Big in Western Montana

• This is Big Sky Country, and goddamn is that true. From the sprawling acreage that abuts your Airbnb, you'll see nothing but

sunshine and crags close enough to touch. Focus your Airbnb search on the areas just outside Livingston and Bozeman, where ex-big-city types support well-stocked general stores, cafés, and pubs. On day two, drive to Gallatin Canyon for a day hike, or just set up shop on your front porch and be reminded that silence is more than a setting on your phone. —M.B.



A man in a dark suit and patterned shirt is sitting at a white desk. His right hand is resting on a laptop. On his left wrist, he wears a Baume & Mercier Hampton 10155 watch with a white dial and a dark leather strap. A Samsung Galaxy S6 edge in Gold Platinum is lying on the desk, connected to a white charging cable. The phone's screen is black. The background is a blurred office setting.

4:15 PM

CHARGE FAST, MOVE AHEAD
Extend your battery by
4 hours in about 10 minutes*

FEATURED: Samsung Galaxy S6 edge in Gold Platinum;
Baume & Mercier Hampton 10155 watch; Dior Homme leather bag.

*Actual duration may vary. Available with
the adaptive fast charger (in-box).

SAMSUNG Galaxy S6 edge



7:30 PM

**LIGHT UP ANY MOMENT,
ANY TIME**

Superior photos, even in low light*

FEATURED: Samsung Galaxy S6 in Black Sapphire;
Brady Legler earrings on her.

*The photo is enhanced.

SAMSUNG Galaxy S6

8:00 AM

**REFINED STYLE,
DYNAMIC DESIGN**

POWER
UP

FEATURED: Samsung Galaxy S6 edge in Black Sapphire;
Baume & Mercier Clifton 10057 watch.

SAMSUNG
Galaxy S6 | S6 edge



11:00 PM
RECHARGE EFFORTLESSLY
Built-in wireless connectivity*

FEATURED: Samsung Galaxy S6 edge in Gold Platinum; Samsung wireless charger in Black; Calvin Klein light gray briefcase; Baume & Mercier Hampton 10155 watch; Aperture by Ulrich Lang New York fragrance.

*Wireless charger is sold separately.
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SAMSUNG Galaxy S6 edge

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EVENTS → PROMOTIONS → EXCLUSIVES



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APRIL 2015 | NEW YORK CITY

#GQSTYLEWARS

This spring, GQ announced the winner of #GQStyleWars: **Zach LaVine** of the Minnesota Timberwolves. The charitable competition pitted the best-dressed NBA newcomers against one another in a contest that gave fans the opportunity to support the player they deemed the league's best dressed. "I had a lot of fun participating in #GQStyleWars, and it's an absolute honor to win the competition," said LaVine. "GQ gave us young guys in the NBA a cool way to fuse fashion and charity." His \$10,000 award went to **Blessings in a Backpack**, which provides nutritious food options for children in his hometown of Seattle.

gq.com/stylewars



THE BEST NEW MENSWEAR DESIGNERS IN AMERICA

DESIGNER SPOTLIGHT | THE HILL-SIDE

GQ and **Gap** have teamed up to celebrate four of the most brilliant new menswear makers in the country. Each one will design an affordable line with GQ's guidance, available in Gap stores this fall. First up are Emil and Sandy Corsillo, the fabric junkies from The Hill-Side.

#GQforGap



EXPLORE MONTBLANC

Montblanc TimeWalker Urban Speed celebrates the adventurer in every man and is designed to successfully withstand the demands of man's daily urban adventures to achieve new heights in performance. Its design will strike a chord with those who live life at their own pace and by their own rules. While its style reinterprets the powerful and meticulously crafted lines of the TimeWalker Collection, the new Montblanc TimeWalker Urban Speed makes huge strides forward in design and technology.

Shop montblanc.com.



BACK TO
NATURE
» LAKE

Man the
Rudder on
Lake Rabun,
Georgia

• Usually lakes are so large they attract boats of perma-spring-breakers, or they're so private you can't stay lakeside without a mortgage. Rabun is the happy medium: a dammed-up twisty bend of the Tallulah River that now

doubles as Atlanta's favorite escape hatch. VRBO.com is your best bet for waterfront cabins. The lake itself is cozy enough for a late-night skinny dip and big enough to skim in a rented pontoon boat (\$250 a day from the Rabun Boathouse, \$30 for a case of Bud Heavy).—M.B.



Have a Nice Trip, Man!

One guy's secret to really getting into the great outdoors? 'Shrooms!

→ "I'm not feeling a damn thing," I said to the three other people sitting on a rock with me in a tiny coastal inlet in nowhere Maine. I'd come up here—along with my fiancée and two friends—saddled with that modern desperation felt by city dwellers who post Facebook links to stories about how technology is swallowing our lives. Which is exactly why I was so bummed these 'shrooms weren't working. It was my first time. I wanted out of my head. Then: "Never mind," I said. "The earth's breathing."

I won't bore you with the details of that first trip—*psych*, yes, I will. The horizon rose and softly fell, like the chest of a girl sleeping in bed, but less creepy to watch! Boulders in the bay slid across my vision like the logs in Frogger! The fog felt like a sexy, mysterious blanket! I smiled goofily. I didn't take a single Instagram. And for the first time in too long, the natural world and I vibed in a proper I-am-small, you-are-primal-and-awe-inspiring way.

Ultimately, that's what you want out of a sojourn into the great outdoors, right? Relaxation, sure, but a reminder that there's more to life beyond direct deposit and critically acclaimed TV. 'Shrooms get you into that mind-set and get you there quickly—which is key if you've only got a three-day weekend, not three months to walk the Appalachian Trail. But there are some important rules to embarking on your own psychotropic hookup with Mother Nature.

A little 'shroomage goes a long way, because a lot can go very badly. Eat just a few. Or steep them in tea. Or do as I did and find some yuppie dealer who makes 'shroom chocolates, which taste good, instead of like earthy ass. You want a couple of hours of blissful observation, not twenty years of flashbacks to melting trees with crying faces.

Have snacks. No explanation needed.

And when the 'shrooms kick in, find a way to break off quietly from the group to do your own thing. Wander, sit motionless and listen to birds, or, like my friend did, touch a bunch of plants and rocks until you find something that feels amazing. (Hint: moss.) Otherwise you're stuck listening to everyone narrating his own high, and there's nothing worse than some dude who's tripping on 'shrooms and wants to tell everyone about it.—JON WILDE

Man Skills >Get Lit the Right Way

STEP 1



Build a Better Pit
The old dirt pit with a rock rim works—but it's not perfect. What you really want is an open passage for airflow on one side and a large flat rock opposite that'll aim smoke upward—not into your face.

STEP 2



Find That Creative Spark
Tinder—plus a trusty Bic—is the key to getting your blaze going. Good: dry twigs (not leaves; they smoke). Better: dry twigs doused in high-proof booze. Best: dryer lint. Seriously.

STEP 3



Go on a Kindling Mission
Grab lots of kindling—small sticks and thin branches that vary in width from pencil to Sharpie. If the ground is wet, nab dangling branches or steal from a dying shrub. Sorry, shrub.

STEP 4



Construction Zone
The teepee: iffy shelter, perfect fire architecture. Center your tinder in the pit. Light it, add some kindling, then build a three-log "teepee" above it. Shout "There is fire!" and accept your glory.—BENJY HANSEN-BUNDY



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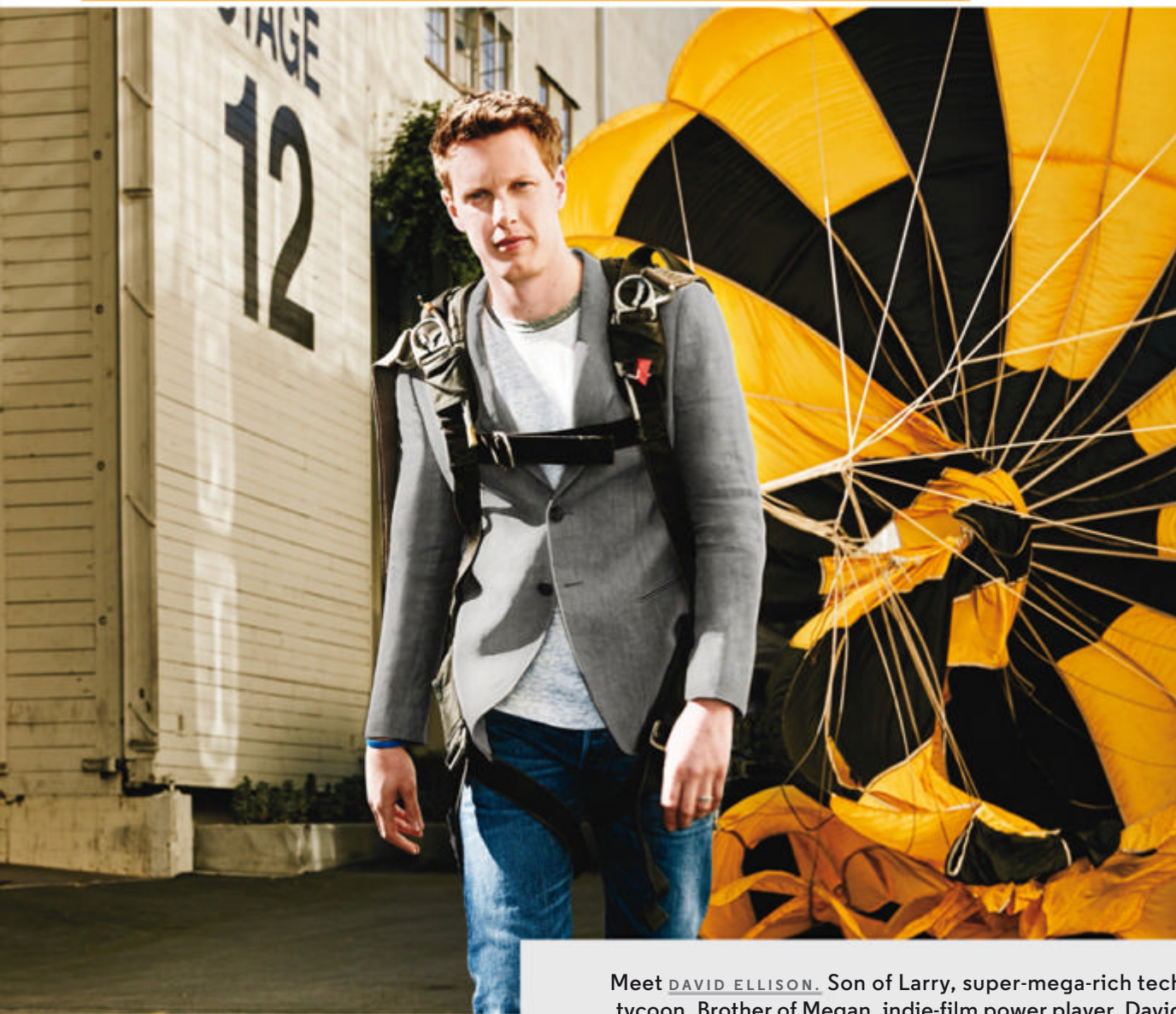
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NOVAK DJOKOVIC / TENNIS PLAYER
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The Kid Pays for the Picture



HAVE YOU EVER been dropped off at your hotel in a Ferrari, the kind that takes corners so sharply that when the driver is informed he just passed your turn—that it's no big deal, he can just take the next turn and loop around—he *does* take the turn you thought you were

Meet DAVID ELLISON. Son of Larry, super-mega-rich tech tycoon. Brother of Megan, indie-film power player. David makes movies, too—huge ones like *Star Trek into Darkness* and the new *Terminator*—and flies airplanes and drives Ferraris and generally lives as large as a human being can. In fact, when you're a super-mega-rich scion like David, your problems really boil down to just one: How do you measure success when failure—true, ruinous failure—is inconceivable? ➤ TAFFY BRODESSER-AKNER



FEEL

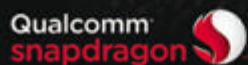
SEE

Genuine leather, Ceramic Craft and Metallic Craft. The back of the all-new LG G4 has been fabricated in three cutting edge materials, each designed with an eye towards classic craftsmanship. And with a 5.5" IPS Quantum QuadHD display and 16 MP camera with an f/1.8 lens underneath it all, it performs as beautifully as it looks.

See the Great. Feel the Great.

LG G4

www.LG.com/G4



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• Ellison has a lot on the line this month—keeping *Mission: Impossible*'s hot streak going and bringing *Terminator* back to life.

way, way beyond taking, and there you are, suddenly, safely deposited at your hotel? Have you ever had dinner with someone whose father owns an island? A Hawaiian island? Have you ever toured someone's gleaming airplane hangar, in which he houses his actual airplanes? Have you ever met someone whom you could refer to, clearly and comprehensibly, in a text to someone else simply by using the emoji for a bag of money? Because I have.

It is so tacky to talk about money, I know. And in stories like these, there is *always* money. Everyone is at least baseline famous-person rich—which, to be clear, is very rich. These are people who have landed on a helipad within the past, say, six months. They have soft hands and vacation homes that aren't time-shares. You sort of ignore the money because it's always there. It's regular.

But this isn't that kind of story, this isn't that kind of rich. This is eighth-largest-yacht-in-the-world rich. This is \$12-million-house-in-Malibu rich. This is it-ends-up-that-Ferrari-costs-\$233,509 (which I know because I'm disgusting and I Googled it from the elevator of the hotel after he dropped me off) rich. This is so rich that you could do many foolish things with your money and still never be in any danger of being poor, never be in danger of winding up even baseline famous-person rich.

This is the story of David Ellison, Silicon Valley scion, gazillionaire movie producer and CEO of Skydance, the man who had big roles in the twin behemoth July releases of *Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation* and *Terminator Genisys*. This is the story of a man who bought his way into Hollywood because he was rich and stayed there because he was good. It's a fun story, and so we're telling it. The question is: Why is he?

ANOTHER THING I've learned about people who are baseline famous-person rich: They are careful not to remind you how rich they are when you're writing about them. They show up in their regular-person clothes. Ari Emanuel used to drive a Prius. For a while, Jeffrey Katzenberg drove a worthless '90s-era Mustang. Once, an actor I interviewed asked me not to write that he was wearing Prada sneakers.

David Ellison makes no effort to disguise his wealth. When he walks into the Spitfire Grill at the Santa Monica airport, just a quick Ferrari ride from his two actual airplanes, he apologizes for being late. He was out at the family's spread in Palm Springs last night so that he could attend the tennis match early this morning in Indian Wells. He flew his own helicopter back but had to reverse it because of fog, so he quickly chartered a jet. He is only fifteen minutes late.

Ellison is tall and blond, with skin so tan and eyebrows so light that they cancel each other out and manage to give off the golden glow of the genetically sparkling. He goes to the gym every morning; everyone tells me he's incredibly disciplined. He is either very guarded or very square, beginning his anecdotes with phrases like "I'll never forget..." and laughing as he tells me a story about a time when he was naughty but in reality wasn't naughty at all. Over the course of our four meetings, he'll sometimes go back to a previous conversation and restate something, just to make sure I've understood him.

There's a reason for that. This is the first time David Ellison has ever agreed to be profiled. He has talked about his business, his movies, but he's never done *this*. (Omertà is a family tradition: His father is the media-shy former Oracle CEO Larry Ellison, the third-richest person in America, a country full of rich people; his sister is extremely-media-shy Megan Ellison, founder of the movie company Annapurna, which made *Her*, *Zero Dark Thirty*, and *American Hustle*, movies that are almost diametrically opposed financially and artistically to the fare David produces.) There are only a few reasons that someone like David would want to do a profile. One is so that people will know his name. But we already know the Ellison name. So it has to be the other reason: to get out from under it.

DAVID ELLISON realized he was David Ellison relatively late in the game, and he remembers the exact moment. He was 14

years old. "I'll never forget," he begins. It was freshman orientation day at his new private high school in the Bay Area, when behind him he heard some kid say, "Hey, I hear Larry Ellison's son goes to school here. I'm going to make friends with that kid. He's my boy." David turned around and stuck his hand out and said, "Hi, I'm David, very nice to meet you." David, now 32, tells this like it's the sickest burn in the world. I would not call David Ellison edgy.

David and Megan, three years younger, were raised by their mother, Barbara Boothe, the third of Larry's now four wives. (They split up shortly after Megan's birth.) They weren't poor, he knew that—they just seemed like a Silicon Valley family that was well-off. But David noticed that the houses were gradually getting bigger, and it was like a frog in slowly boiling water.

Barbara made sure her kids inherited her work ethic, giving them chores and \$5 weekly allowances. She loved movies, and the three of them would gather in the family room they referred to as their own personal Blockbuster, complete with more than 3,000 VHS movies. They'd watch the same ones over and over: all three *Star Wars* movies, back to back, *Jurassic Park*, the original *Terminator*, *Back to the Future*.

"After one viewing, he'd be able to quote the whole thing back verbatim," Megan told me. "I was always so blown away by it, just because I could never do it. And then also it sometimes drove me crazy. Shut up and let us watch the movie."

They didn't see a lot of Larry in those years—he wasn't absentee, but it would be hard to call him an involved parent, except

"David matured quickly, I think because of the flying," Larry says. "He knew the kind of flying he was doing, it's not like a video game—there are no extra lives."

financially. "I spent, you know, the obligatory weekends with the kids," Larry told me. "But that's very different when they're 5, 6, 7, and 8 than when they become teenagers. And then a lot of the interests teenagers have are the same interests adults have."

David and Larry's first intersection was a form of stunt flying known as aerobatics. At 13, David reminded his parents of a promise they'd made when he was only 3 years old: that he'd be allowed to learn how to fly an airplane when he became a teenager. He immediately found the freedom intoxicating. "The thing I always loved about aerobatic flying is it was actually one of the few opportunities where



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you could actually do something that nobody had ever done before,” David says. Larry took lessons with him, and they learned together. On David’s sixteenth birthday, he flew an Extra 300, one of the top-performing aerobatic airplanes. (Later that day he failed his driver’s test.)

He tells me he had “a little too much fun in high school,” but when I press him for debauched cocaine hot-tub *Less Than Zero* rich-guy-villain stories—now we’re getting somewhere, I think—all he can talk about is the aeronautics: how they’d fly too close to the ground, how they’d go pylon racing around trees that were only fifteen feet high. He never touched alcohol or drugs; flying was the most important thing to him, and such vices are strictly verboten: Caught once, you might never fly again. “An awful lot of kids who grow up with privilege do silly things,” Larry told me. “David matured quickly, I think because of the flying. He knew the kind of flying he was doing, it’s not like a video game—there are no extra lives.”

He spent two summers in high school working for his father at Oracle, building websites, but his interest in software waned fast. He started college at Pepperdine, for business, but quickly transferred to USC for film school. (Megan was the boom operator on his senior-thesis movie.) In 2006, he dropped out to finance *Flyboys*, a World War I fighter-pilot movie starring James Franco and co-starring David Ellison.

The stunt flier got to appear in his very own stunt-flier movie, but the movie crashed. It had cost \$60 million to make and earned only \$13 million. (From *The Globe and Mail*: “The creators of *Flyboys* know no image too clichéd, no narrative convention too exhausted and no psychological motivation too pat.”) Because of David’s last name, Hollywood was watching to see if he was truly dedicated—if he really had talent—or if he was what they call “dumb money,” industry vernacular for a guy who rolls into town wanting a piece of the glitz and flames out twice as quickly.

He was heartbroken—no, literally. He took to bed and, eventually, the hospital. He had gone into atrial fibrillation “as a result of how depressed I got over it.” Once cardioverted, though, he was back at it, this time with *Northern Lights*, which he co-wrote, the very personal story of his best friend and flying buddy, Nick Nilmeier, who was killed a few years earlier when his plane crashed. Taylor Lautner signed on to play Nick, then asked who would play Ellison. David Ellison’s answer was David Ellison, and with that Lautner walked away from the deal, another humiliation. The movie was dead. The town had been right: another heir, another flameout. In most of these stories, the guy limps away and goes off to

invest in tech stocks and widgets, a *Variety* footnote. Right here is when it should have been over for David.

BACK WHEN DAVID told his father he wanted to make movies, Larry said he shouldn’t do it until he was able to answer this question: What will you do if you fail? David’s answer was that he’d get a job as a junior executive at a studio. He was never going to leave. He’d stay and deal with the mess he made.

And clean up that mess he did. Chalk it up to what his sister calls his “endless drive” and “endless determination.” He realized that he’d have to walk away from acting, which he did, though it didn’t stop those stories from haunting him. Even now, during our second meeting, he reminds me that acting was never his primary focus. He calls his dabbling accidental, says it never meant that much to him, and that may be true, though it may also be true that when you fail at something, it’s only human to try to walk back from it.

See, when you’re an Ellison, one epic humiliation won’t ruin you. Not by a long shot. He learned his lessons, vowed to pick properties and partners more wisely. In 2009, Skydance reached a four-year co-financing arrangement with Paramount, important since Paramount had reportedly just walked away from a \$450 million deal with Deutsche Bank, and he could bring at least that much to the table. Then Paramount sent him the screenplay for *True Grit*, an unlikely marriage with the Coen brothers that would earn ten Oscar nominations. Next he executive-produced *World War Z*, the Brad Pitt zombie thriller whose production was so expensive and so troubled it garnered an actual *Vanity Fair* cover cataloging its woes. Again, David seemed to be failing while Hollywood watched, but this

time he recovered again. He opened up his endless coffers to help pay for reshoots, and Damon Lindelof was hired for rewrites. The movie wound up being a massive hit, and a sequel is in the works.

In his time running Skydance, he has helped resurrect *Star Trek* and rejuvenate *Mission: Impossible*. And he has no less than famed fellow aeronautic and *M:I* star Tom Cruise singing his praises to me: “It’s his approach, you know? You’re trained as a pilot, you have to understand and learn the limitations of the airplane. In aerobatics you have to push right to the edge of that—what is going to keep the wing flying and when you’re going into a stall and understanding the limitations of that, and your own limitations.” In slightly less metaphoric terms, “the thing that I admire about David is that he’s not afraid to pick up a shovel and dig.” Okay, last try: “I want to entertain the audience, I always have, and I want people who are equally as dedicated and we’re all there to try to make each other better.”

There are people making very good livings in Hollywood who outsource the expertise that Tom Cruise told me David has made it his mission to learn for himself. Because what is left for the man whose greatest failures can never turn into true ruin? What is left for a man who will still find success even if he is mediocre? What is left is this: to work very hard and to be much, much more than what was predicted for you. “I formed Skydance because I love movies,” he says. “I wanted to create a place where we would be able to make the movies that everybody at the company loves watching and loves becoming a part of.” What he means to say, what he can’t possibly say, what he’s too self-conscious to say is: I won.

TAFFY BRODESSER-AKNER is a GQ correspondent.

A Brief History of Dumb Money (Or: The List David Ellison Was On, Until He Wasn’t)



Curt Schilling

The Red Sox World Series hero made a fortune during his baseball career—then blew \$50 million of it on his ill-fated video-game company.



Donald Trump

He’s tried casinos, airlines, vodka, mortgage lending, and pretending to run for president, thus cementing his status as America’s dumbest money.



L. Ron Hubbard

He was long dead by the time the movie version of his novel *Battlefield Earth* sullied the screen. But it was so bad he gets blame from beyond the grave.



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Your Doober Is Arriving!

Do you ever get that not-so-high feeling? Good news: A slew of West Coast start-ups are determined to help you order pot just as easily as you would a cab or a Tinder hookup. Are kush lovers ready for morning delivery?

—DAN LYONS



“YOU THINK OF the top five comedians, we’ve got three of them as customers,” Gino Gentile says. “The top five singers, we’ve got two of them.” It’s a Friday afternoon, and I’m riding through Hollywood in Gino’s black Lexus SUV as he reels off his client list. Of the people he’ll name, there’s Skyler Gordy, formerly one-half of now defunct turd-pop purveyors LMFAO, and Skyler’s former girlfriend, a *Maxim* model named Chelsea Korka, who has a solo album coming out next year. There’s the rapper

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Mod Sun, who is across town awaiting a delivery. One of those aforementioned singers seems to be Miley Cyrus, who has posted photos of Gino's products on her Instagram account.

Forty-year-old Gino, with his scruffy beard and Lawn Guyland accent, helps run SpeedWeed, the biggest marijuana-delivery service in Los Angeles and, according to Gino, the biggest in the entire United States. He, his brother, AJ, and AJ's girlfriend, Jen, launched the company in 2011, and since then Gino's life has changed in amazing ways. Before this he lived in New York, grew a little weed in his apartment, did customer support for a software company that AJ had founded. Gino spent a lot of time schlepping back and forth between New York and Washington, D.C., which was nowhere near as much fun as sleeping until noon, delivering weed to movie stars and rappers, then partying with them until dawn.

He says he's not overly impressed by fame, but when he moved to L.A., "I told my brother there was just one celebrity that I'd like to meet, and that was Joe Rogan." Thanks to SpeedWeed, not only did Gino meet Joe Rogan, UFC announcer and ex-host of *Fear Factor*, but the two became buddies. There's Gino in Rogan's Twitter feed, partying with him at the Improv, both looking blitzed. Another perk: Since Gino's begun slinging weed, he's become pals with most of the L.A. porn industry—even dating a porn star, 28-year-old Sabrina Maree. "It's kind of surreal," he says.

AJ, the brains of the operation, calls Gino a brand ambassador, which mostly means that Gino spends his days delivering "medicine" to his famous and quasi-famous "patients," often partaking with them after hours. See, Gino is a big believer in the healing powers of pot. He claims he gave

cannabis extract to an elderly cancer patient and shrank her brain tumor by 30 percent. "I've had so much success treating her that I want to shout it from the rooftops," he says.

Gino also cites a recent study from the UK that showed cannabinoids attacking cancer cells in mice. Avowed tokers love studies like this, maybe because it makes them feel less guilty about smoking copious amounts of pot. And let's be honest: Most of SpeedWeed's 26,000 customers aren't buying reefer to combat brain tumors. But Gino is media-savvy enough to know that he can't say that, out loud, to me. Legally speaking, companies like SpeedWeed can only market themselves as purveyors of medicine, and Gino is a cheerful shaman in public.

Not that weed needs his evangelism. Some twenty-three states have legalized medical marijuana. Four—Oregon, Washington, Colorado, and Alaska—along with Washington, D.C., have gone a step further and legalized pot for recreational use. And the only people happier than stoners are stone-cold capitalists.

You want numbers? How about \$8 billion worth? According to *Forbes*, that's the forecasted sales revenue of America's legal marijuana business within just three years. Welcome to the "green rush," as it's been dubbed.

Cubic Designs, a company owned by Warren Buffett, pitches marijuana growers on services to help them optimize their use of floor space in growing facilities. Founders Fund, a top Silicon Valley venture-capital firm, recently invested in Privateer Holdings, a weed-happy company worth an estimated \$425 million. It's run by a trio of MBAs and owns several businesses, like

Leafly, a kind of *Wine Spectator* website for marijuana, plus Tilray and Marley Natural, two companies selling their own signature marijuana strains. Once the province of twitchy guys with backpacks wearing pagers, weed delivery is now undergoing that most revered of Silicon Valley transformations: disruption.

SPEEDWEED'S HOLLYWOOD dispatch center is the biggest of its seven outposts, but it's still just a snoozy three-room bunker overlooking L.A.'s traffic-choked 101, with dingy carpeting held down by used furniture. A scruffy dispatcher takes an order over the phone and watches his drivers, car-shaped dots on a computer screen. A waiting delivery guy does halfhearted pull-ups from a bar hung in a doorway; another employee packs weed into white paper bags.

Then the door bursts open and Chris Cope, one of SpeedWeed's drivers, storms in raging. Was he robbed? Stopped by the cops? No, he's just bitching about getting stiffed on a tip like some righteous Domino's driver. "I just did two deliveries and got a cock in my ass!" Cope rants. "First guy tips me five bucks. Second guy has a \$170 order, and he tells me, 'Hey man, enjoy your Friday, have a nice day, man.' Fuck!"

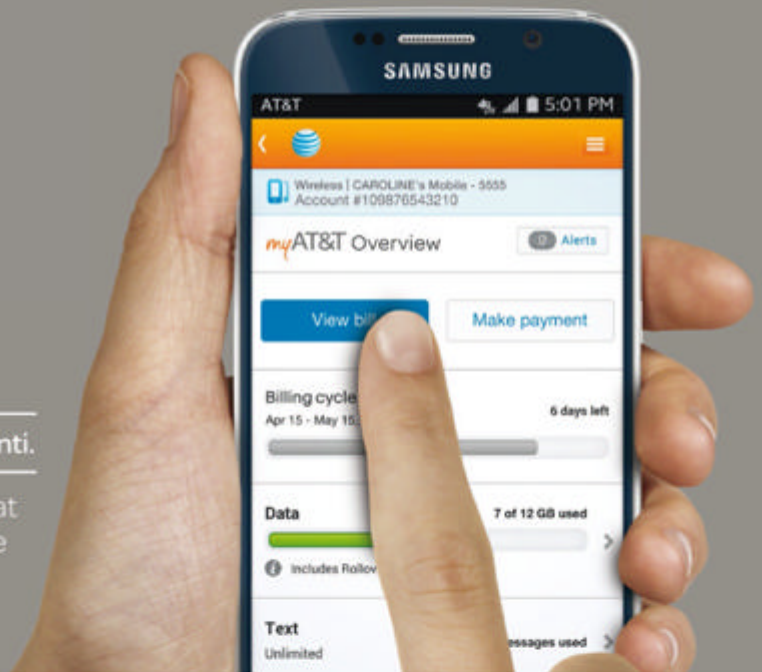
Cope is a pudgy 31-year-old from Gainesville, Florida, who moved to L.A. to make it as a stand-up comic, and he's delivering weed to githe bills. Spending an hour in Friday-afternoon traffic, then coming back with five fucking bucks—on top of the \$9 hourly wage and \$2 delivery fee

Some twenty-three states have legalized medical marijuana. And the only people happier than stoners are stone-cold capitalists.

that SpeedWeed gives him—does not pay many bills. "I've been telling these guys"—by which Cope means AJ and Jen, who handles the company's marketing—"that all you need is a little box on the website to tell these assholes they're supposed to tip. How big a deal would that be? Just a little box on the home page. And maybe something on Twitter once in a while."

Cope's frustration points to another truth of the legal-weed business: Nobody is getting Zuckerberg rich at it yet. "People think it's like drug-dealer money, but it's not," Gino says. SpeedWeed is projected to earn \$5.5 million in revenue this year and will hopefully clear a 12 percent profit margin. (If the IRS allowed companies like SpeedWeed the same tax breaks as

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other businesses, its margin could double.) AJ is re-investing the profit back into the business, “so we currently have a burn rate,” he says. Translated from start-up-ese: More money is flowing out than coming in.

SpeedWeed’s customers run the gamut from tech geeks in Orange County to soccer moms in Pasadena to a bunch of elderly women who live at a senior center—the “ganja grannies,” as AJ calls them. Growing the biggest weed-delivery company in California means doing the same boring stuff as any successful business: coding an intuitive website, hiring reliable employees, building in the techy amenities we’ve come to expect. If you’ve got a verified medical-marijuana license, place an order online and you’ll get a text from SpeedWeed informing you that your driver’s name is Jamie, he is eight miles away, and he should arrive in twenty-five minutes, based on the current traffic.

The back end of the business is handled by AJ and Jen, who work out of offices in Woodland Hills. AJ is in his early forties, wears blazers with jeans, and looks like someone you’d see at a TED talk. Jen is a brunette with wholesome midwestern girl-next-door looks, a sometime TV actress whose IMDb page lists appearances on shows like *ER*, *The Shield*, and *Boston Legal*. Both smoke on occasion, but they’re not stoners. Jen’s parents are so conservative that she only recently told them about her day job. “My mother cried for a week,” she says. She tells people that her last name is Gentile and that she’s married to AJ, though when we meet, the two are still only engaged, and her last name is something else, which she asks me not to use. The reason, as far as I can tell, is that however legitimized the marijuana industry is now, it’s still not clean enough to

risk her acting career or shaming the family name in public. So I’ll just call her Jen.

SpeedWeed employees receive a discount on the merchandise (technically a “decreased donation”), but smoking up at work will get them canned. “No one using medical marijuana should ever get behind a wheel,” AJ says, adding that Jen is spearheading a nonprofit called Businesses Against Altered Driving, or BAAD, to encourage responsible toking. Type baad.org into a web browser, however, and a page tells you the domain is for sale. Try baadgroup.org and you’re redirected to SpeedWeed. Maybe it’s still a work in progress. Or maybe it’s as sincere as those anti-drunk-driving campaigns run by liquor companies.

Clean-cut business types like AJ and Jen, who care as much about SEO and ROI as they do THC, are the face of the green rush. There are none of the usual dope-smoking accoutrements in their SpeedWeed office: no black-light pot-leaf posters, no three-foot-tall bong named James Van Der Bong. SpeedWeed keeps three attorneys and a PR agency on retainer, and has a big-shot chief financial officer. “We’re not messing around,” says AJ. “We’re building a company that can either go public or get acquired.”

Until then, Jen and AJ are happy building a company your mom would buy weed from. Forty percent of SpeedWeed’s customers are female. Jen says that’s because women like her—professional women, women with kids—might want to relax with a vape pen or cannabis candy after dinner, but they don’t want to visit a dispensary.

More than 1,000 dispensaries dot greater Los Angeles—many seedy, illicit little places. “There are security guards with guns standing outside, and maybe a pit bull, and then you get buzzed through three different doors, and you’re walking down hallways with lime green paint and being waited on by these 18-year-old girls with tats and piercings,” Jen says. “Who’s going to go there with two kids in a minivan?”

BEFORE HE even launched SpeedWeed, AJ studied the operations manuals from Papa John’s, Domino’s, and FedEx. Based on their examples, he created what he calls a “hub and spoke” model, putting dispatch centers all over Los Angeles so most deliveries take less than ninety minutes. SpeedWeed’s forty-seven couriers cover a 6,000-square-mile region around Los Angeles and make about 150 deliveries a day.

But AJ’s biggest innovation is a clever corporate structure that lets SpeedWeed skirt California Senate Bill 420, a law that

says weed can only be sold by not-for-profit cooperatives. Plenty of dispensaries ignore the law and operate until they get busted, popping up later in new locations. AJ and Jen don’t want to play weed-delivery Whac-A-Mole, waiting to get hammered. So they founded a co-op, called Cosmic Mind, and then created a half-dozen other companies that sell services to the co-op: marketing, branding, security, software, logistics, and fulfillment. Cosmic Mind and its delivery service are not legally allowed to turn a profit, but the other companies can—and eventually will, AJ insists.

AJ can’t skirt every one of California’s arcane marijuana laws, though. To wit: In California, it’s legal to sell and consume edible cannabis products but illegal to chemically extract the oil required to make dabs, which look like concentrated THC brittle. So how are they made? Illegally, while the state feigns obliviousness. Enforcement varies by location. In Northern California, local authorities regulate dispensaries. In Southern California, it’s the Wild West. And that’s just California. Every state has its own byzantine marijuana legislature.

But the peskiest legal obstacle to SpeedWeed—or anyone—becoming a powerhouse ganja-delivery service? The fact that pot remains illegal at the federal level. If SpeedWeed expands into a new state, it

The peskiest legal obstacle to SpeedWeed—or anyone—becoming a powerhouse ganja-delivery service? The fact that pot remains illegal at the federal level.

must strike new partnerships with growers in that state. Imagine if Starbucks had to operate a coffee plantation in every state where it wanted to open a store and you can see the problem.

The entire weed-delivery industry exists under a shadow. Which makes building a scalable, profitable nationwide business around marijuana impossible. AJ prays that Washington changes its mind before SpeedWeed’s investment money dries up, but not even the weed industry’s strongest proponents expect the federal government to change its mind anytime soon. Uber may battle entrenched regulations in every city it moves into, but at least taxi rides can’t trigger a DEA raid on company HQ.

BACK IN GINO’S Lexus, we’re talking weed growers. The top-shelf Cabbage Patch buds we’re about (*continued on page 103*)



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→ Dinner: The Toughest Ticket in Town



If you thought trying to nab a reservation at a hot new restaurant was hard, just wait until you see what the industry is cooking up next. Actually, don't wait. Book a table at any one of the high-end food temples that now require you to buy a ticket—and pay for your meal—far in advance. A slew of idealistic chefs think this is the future of dining. The rest of us hope it's not — **BRETT MARTIN**



DOES ANYBODY REMEMBER when dinner was easy?

Surely there was a distant era in which the desire to eat someplace didn't guarantee that a thousand people like you also wanted to eat there at the same time; when a Wednesday-night meal didn't require planning twelve Wednesdays in advance; even when dinner was a mere question of sustenance on the way to a film or concert or other cultural event of the evening. For a long time now, food culture has *been* culture. And, for almost as long, that culture has been oversubscribed.

So, let's begin by conceding there's a problem here that might need addressing. Not that the quickly expanding army of would-be disrupters of the reservations game is exactly waiting around for an invitation. The names trip off the tongue and clutter the App Store: Reserve, Resy, Killer Rezzy, SeatMe—all lined up to take on OpenTable, that behemoth purveyor of 5:30 and 10:30 seatings. One stands out as potentially revolutionizing not only how you get your table, but the nature of hospitality itself. The software system Tock is the creation of Nick Kokonas, the business partner of Chicago chef Grant Achatz, and its mission is to turn restaurant reservations into prepaid tickets, just like you would buy for a sporting event or a concert.

For a man who wants to blow things up, Kokonas is a likable guy. The 47-year-old native of the Chicago suburbs is friendly, open, and clearly the smartest guy in most rooms. He anticipates your every objection and is cheerfully ready to talk for as many hours as it will take for you to see the light. He was a derivatives trader before partnering, a decade ago, with Achatz to open Alinea, often mentioned as the best restaurant in America. But tidy as it would be to see Kokonas as the calculating businessman crashing the dining world, the narrative doesn't really hold. "People think, Oh, he's the guy who wrote a big check and I'm the creative one," says Achatz. "That's not true. He's an über-creative person in a lot of ways." Kokonas, the chef says, is frequently the voice in the company arguing against raising prices, or for features that enhance the diner's experience but detract from the bottom line. And to be sure, derivatives traders who leave the business to follow their passion for avant-garde restaurants are vastly preferable to those who, say, stay derivatives traders.

Still, Kokonas brought to his new career an outsider's penchant for questioning how things are done and a disrupter's refusal to take "because that's how it's always been" as an

answer. From the beginning, the world of reservations was his special frustration. "If you think about how you book most restaurants now, it's like throwing darts at a dart board," Kokonas says. "You're asked a question: *What time do you want to go?* I want to go Saturday at 7 P.M. *Well, we don't have anything within two hours of that time. Guess again.* They're just simply trying to sell you the shoulder times"—the earliest and latest reservations. "So they're lying to you. And you're lying to them by saying you'll actually show up."

That is the crux of Kokonas's pitch, that Tock solves the problem that has plagued restaurants since time immemorial: no-shows.

This, remember, is a business in which owners can tell you the price of each piece of stemware, where the \$1 that OpenTable charges per reservation makes a major difference, where profits measured in low-single-digit percentages are considered pretty healthy. And where the fewer than 10 percent of people who don't show up for reservations constitute a significant enough burden as to justify changing the rules for the rest of us.



The math can be startling. At a restaurant like Alinea, a mere table of two no-showing each night can add up to a quarter of a million dollars a year. By selling tickets, Kokonas figured, you would eliminate the problem, plus increase efficiency in every other way, since each night's service would become so much more predictable. By automating the process, you could concentrate your (smaller) reservations staff on interacting with customers who *were* coming—keeping track of their preferences, reaching out to confirm, etc.—rather than spending all their time saying no to those who weren't. He saw his chance in 2011, when he and Achatz opened Next, a restaurant whose

entire concept and menu change several times per year. Alinea, along with the pair's cocktail bar, The Aviary, adopted Next's ticketing system a year later. Last fall a former Google engineer, Brian Fitzpatrick, jumped aboard as a partner in the newly launched version of Tock, along with such investors as chefs Thomas Keller and Ming Tsai and the owners of the huge Chicago restaurant group Lettuce Entertain You.

In an exhaustive and exhausting blog post last year, hung heavy with illustrations and charts, Kokonas wrote that no-shows at Alinea were down to just slightly over 1 percent since the company shifted to tickets. At Next, the count of full no-shows—rather than, say, only two diners showing up despite a reservation for four—was a mere five for the entire year.

Both restaurants are of the type for which tickets make the most obvious sense—highly experiential, theatrical, offering an almost identical culinary journey to a relatively small number of diners each night. But Kokonas has a broader vision, in which Tock is employed by all manner of restaurants. The Aviary uses the same software, only prospective guests are asked to put down a deposit, rather than the entire price of a meal. The deposit—from \$20 to \$40, depending on the day and time—is then applied in full to the final check. Kokonas claims that the simple act of putting down a deposit—what economists refer to as a "sunk cost"—virtually eliminates no-shows on its own.

KOKONAS IS HARDLY ALONE in looking at the state of restaurants and seeing a numbers game. Resy, for instance, is the creation of Eater co-founder Ben Leventhal and tech entrepreneur Gary Vaynerchuk. I should begin by reporting that, when I signed up for the service, my profile picture automatically, inexplicably, appeared as a head shot of noted New York Yankees third baseman Alex Rodriguez. This seemed so improbable, so downright crazy and borderline sociopathic, that I actually asked somebody to confirm that I wasn't hallucinating. Surely no corporation poised to scalp reservations would intentionally invoke a man who, aside from being the very symbol of smarmy, entitled, overpriced New York arrogance, is reported to *bring his own food to restaurants*.

In time, I came to see A-Rod as just one of several Worst Things About New York that Resy seems to have embraced as its brand, none more than the shallow, grasping obsession with snagging a seat at the hot place. The flavor is nicely captured in a recent tweet from Leventhal: "Oh, look. We're about to put some @CosmeNYC tables up on @Resy. Or you could wait until 2016. #xoxoresy." Or in the opt-out link for the app's "Priority Access" push notifications: "No thanks. I like eating



at 6 or 10:30.” This is how lords on the ramparts taunt the peasants massed below.

To be fair, the whole scalping category runs, to one degree or another, on the same strain of feverish FOMO. Reserve, which just received a \$15 million investment boost from the founders of Uber and Foursquare, along with a passel of celebrities including Jon Favreau, Jared Leto, and Will.i.am, leads its pitch with the fact that you can pay your bill, Uber-like, directly through the app. But Reserve also offers the ability to bid for especially difficult seats by promising to pay a certain percentage over the menu price on the whole meal. (A recent search suggested that the only New York restaurants currently taking advantage of that option were those of Mario Carbone and Rich Torrisi’s Major Food Group, which already abides by the Las Vegas–proven principle that the chance to spend lavishly can act as a flavor enhancer. Reserve’s suggested premium of 30 percent at Carbone would raise the

price of its famous veal parmigiana to \$83.) Meanwhile, Killer Rezzy, an app currently in beta, sells reservations at a small number of New York restaurants for an average of \$25.

Tock, too, works on a “dynamic” pricing model, wherein tickets at more in-demand times cost more than ones at dead hours. The meal at Alinea that costs \$210 per person (before service and wine) at 5 P.M. might be \$295 per person at 8:30 P.M.

Not every restaurateur sees such services as being in his best interest, despite the promise of a share of the revenue. “We’ve spent our entire careers trying to dispel this idea that we’re holding back tables and there’s a secret conspiracy controlling why you can’t get in. And now you’re asking me to turn around and confirm that we’re a bunch of shysters and criminals?” says David Rosoff, a veteran Los Angeles front-of-house manager. “The fallout is your place is filled between seven thirty and nine with people who can afford to pay extra, and you’ve alienated all the regulars, all the locals, all your core business. Two years later, when you’re not as hot a ticket, they’re not coming back. It’s short-term thinking and it’s going to be bad for our industry.”

Surely there is money to be made by exploiting the worst end of the food revolution. But scalping seems like a good argument for the, perhaps naive, notion that just because there is a niche in the market doesn’t mean it should be filled.

OF COURSE, unlike, say, Uber, the true client for this new breed of reservations systems is the business, not the customer. As such, its evangelists show an exquisite, tender sensitivity to the trials and travails of restaurateurs. “They are putting restaurants back in control of” *(continued on page 102)*

Tickets, Please! Five Ways the Ticketing Revolution Could Make Your Life Easier

Sneaker Releases

Some stores already hand out tickets for big releases. Pro: Cuts down lines. Con: People still get shot.



Weddings

You don’t have to make a guest list and you get to find out who really loves you.



Bars

Making someone who needs a drink wait for a drink is how people get hurt.



Surf Lineups

Share the swell, brah.



Airlines

Like, real tickets, good for a seat, not the chance to exchange for a shitty voucher.




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FINE DINING DOESN'T
HAVE TO MEAN FINE CHINA.

FROM TABLECLOTH TO SANDWICH SHOP.
A FOODIE KNOWS GOURMET CAN BE ANYWHERE.

ARE YOU
a 
FOODIE?

SHOW US WHAT MAKES YOU A FOODIE AT THE INFINITE TABLE.
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THE 20
BEST-
DRESSED
MEN
ALIVE

2015's STYLE GODS (AND WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM THEM)

We got scientific on this. Hundreds of candidates considered. Thousands of street photos analyzed. Several hours just contemplating Jared Leto's hair. It's not about who has the best stylist. We were looking for men who could teach us a thing or two. And we found them: twenty dudes whose style we want to steal. Don't worry—we'll show you how to do it





< - -

RULE NO. 1
**MAKE
YOURSELF
THE
CENTER OF
ATTENTION
LIKE KANYE
WEST**

All these guys have something in common: You won't find a single shrinking violet. You might find a dress (Jaden Smith) or a pair of navy short-shorts worn by a rap titan (Jay Z), but you're not going to find a man who's scared to put himself front and center. Also: Everyone here follows his own spirit guide. Check out Mr. West, wading through a sea of suits in faded blue denim. You don't have to love his music (though it helps!) to appreciate the fearless and highly influential way Ye has approached fashion. He's merged references from the past (Ralph Lauren!) with a vision for the future (dude has watched *The Matrix* a lot) and come to look like, well, what people will eventually think of when they think of men's style in 2015.



**International
Man of Vintage**

Gosling's boots prove that nothing gives you a faster-acting dose of personal style than pre-loved clothes.

RULE NO. 2

FEAR NOTHING (INCLUDING FLOWERS) LIKE PHARRELL WILLIAMS



If you're wondering who made that song "Happy"—it's this guy. But does he ever take shit for his DIY rainbow jackets? "Wow, I'd be afraid for anyone that had a problem with a rainbow," he tells us. "And flowers? Man, if we don't have flowers, the bees can't pollinate and the food chain... It's over! There are ills in this world, but there's also inspiration."



RULE NO. 3

THROW IT AWAY (AS A WAY TO SHINE) LIKE RYAN GOSLING

You know Gosling. The guy who's gone out of his way to *not* become the biggest movie star on the planet. The guy who appears at airports wearing an outfit we'll call "I don't actually give a shit." But then he'll turn up on a red carpet in a blue tux looking like a shiny silver dollar. Who can turn it on and off like that? Someone who's in complete control.



Sandro \$1,475 | sandro-paris.com



RULE NO. 4

REDEFINE "DRESS YOUR AGE" LIKE JEFF GOLDBLUM

You can't call it a Goldblumaissance, because he never went away. Yet since *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, we've re-fallen for the fast-talking actor known for wearing clothes by designers half his age. "I guess it's okay to bust myself here....," Goldblum says of his style. "If I'm trying to create an impression, it's that I don't put as much time into it as I do."

RULE NO. 5

WALK IN THE
FOOTSTEPS OF
ROCK 'N' ROLL JESUS
LIKE JARED LETO



RULE NO. 6

REVIVE THE FORGOTTEN
NOTION OF MALE GLAMOUR
LIKE BRADLEY COOPER

A decade ago, he was best known for playing a frat bro named Sack in *Wedding Crashers*. Now look at him. Stylish men generally fit into three categories: The rebels (see: Dylan, Davis, Dean). The toughs (see: Ali, Brando, McQueen). And the glamorous guys like Redford and Beatty who comb back their hair, don dandyish suits, and call to mind adjectives like *vainglorious*. At his best, Cooper looks like he's headed for that third club.

In the future, when period dramas set in our age are streamed directly to people's retinas, the scripts will call for beards on every man. And nobody embodies the contemporary hirsuteness quite like this guy. In fact, nothing embodies the aesthetic of the entire Brooklyn-Austin-Portland axis like Jared Leto's ombré *My Little Pony* hair. The man simply grows the nicest, most combable folliculars in America, then rocks the clothes—tank top and grunge belt included—that go with them.

RULE NO. 7

START EVERY DAY (AND LOOK)
WITH ONE THING YOU LOVE
LIKE LEBRON JAMES



"Since I was young, I've started my outfit off with my shoes," LeBron tells us. "And then I go from there." Check out how James switches from his power game (an assault of electric red) to finesse (smartly matching white sneakers with his undershirt and headphones). NBA style has evolved a lot since Jordan first took flight. But still: Gotta be the shoes.



RULE NO. 8
MAKE FASHION
YOUR VICTIM
LIKE A\$AP ROCKY



High-fashion labels, like the ones A\$AP Rocky loves to wear, can overwhelm a guy who doesn't have the right swagger. But Rocky—a walking fireball of sly Harlem-bred cockiness and A-list charisma—has a way of making designer clothes serve him. “The last time I wore an actual tie was for a funeral in 2010,” Rocky replies when asked about this look—which includes the modernist air-tie move he’s become known for. “I don’t wear ties for the simple reason that it’s expected. I don’t like looking like everyone else. Who said we have to wear a suit and tie together?”



Karl Lagerfeld Jr.

“I didn’t even wear a tie to the Met Ball this year,” Rocky tells us. “I love that Anna Wintour doesn’t get pissed off at me when I do shit like that.”

Out-of-Office Hov

You think Jay Z would be caught dead wearing this on the streets of N.Y.C.? The point of vacation is to escape from life back home—and that includes your wardrobe.



RULE NO. 9

KNOW-AND CELEBRATE!—YOUR NATURAL GIFTS LIKE BRAD PITT



Here's what we discovered in our vet of Brad Pitt: He's as wholly committed to khaki-and-white clothes as he is to constantly snacking on-screen, but has no loyalty at all when it comes to his haircut. Which makes us realize: If you ask for "the usual" every time you hit the barber's chair, you're blowing your best opportunity to switch up your style.



RULE NO. 10 DON'T AGE GRACEFULLY. AGE BOSS-FULLY. LIKE JAY Z



Still the most aspirational name on this list. Jay's in his forties now. Seven years married. Three years a dad. Raps way less. But whether on his home turf, where he invented the Tom-Ford-meets-the-streets look that says, "I'll take over from here"—or in Portofino squiring Bey onto a boat wearing a Rodney Dangerfield polo (and, ahem, a \$300K Audemars)—he's still drawing the blueprint for how to live not like a lame fashion plate but like a true don.

Yep, we live in an era when The Keith Richards Award for Louche Style goes to a guy in a teen-pop boy band created by Simon Cowell. But we gotta give it up: The kid from 1D who parties with Kate Moss—and dated Kendall and Taylor—picks the same jeans and Chelsea boots off the floor every morning, pushes his hair out of his face, and somehow emerges looking rock-godly.

RULE NO. 11

DRESS LIKE THE ROCK STAR YOU WANT TO BE, NOT THE BOY-BAND STAR YOU ARE LIKE HARRY STYLES





Rag & Bone Standard Issue \$210
rag-bone.com



RULE NO. 12

CULTIVATE YOUR INNER ASS-KICKER
LIKE DANIEL CRAIG

Paparazzi, beware: When Daniel Craig hasn't been decked out by the 007 wardrobe department in a Tom Ford suit, he can be found stalking the streets in hard-boiled denim looking like a pissed-off gold prospector from the 1800s or a rough-and-tumble fighter pilot.



The Scoring
Champion

We feel sorry for the poor dude whose girlfriend just caught Ronaldo's eye.



RULE NO. 13

...OR, IF
YOU'VE
GOT IT,
YOUR
OUTER
ASS-
KICKER
LIKE
CRISTIANO
RONALDO

His paycheck trumps LeBron's. His little black book rivals Leo's. His body rivals David's. (The one by Michelangelo.) So when CR7 goes out sun-worshipping in Portugal, he ain't wearing knee-length board shorts.

John Mayer is an aficionado. A collector of wearable things. First it was sneakers. Then watches. Recently? Highly coveted stuff from Visvim, the Japanese brand with a spiritually devoted following. "I have a lot of their Tibetan robes," Mayer says of his collection. "It'll end up in *People* magazine that I was wearing a bathrobe. And it's like, Well, actually it's a totally hand-painted, natural-dye... It's made with real indigo and crushed-up ladybugs!"

RULE NO. 14
DON'T THINK OF THEM AS CLOTHES,
THINK OF THEM AS VIBES
LIKE JOHN MAYER



RULE NO. 15
STUDY YOUR
OWN GAME TAPE
LIKE RUSSELL
WESTBROOK



"Years from now, it's gonna be interesting to look back at Instagram," says OKC scoring machine and fearless dresser Russ Westbrook. "Already, I look at my photos from a year ago and think, 'Man! That's evolution.' My style changes so much."



RULE NO. 16
LET YOUR FREAK
FLAG FLY
LIKE JADEN SMITH

A Q+A WITH AMERICA'S
 MOST STYLISH 17-YEAR-OLD

GQ: Hey Jaden, when you're getting dressed, where do you start?

JS: First I roll over on the bed I built for myself and look at the ground. If there are clothes I wore from the previous day and they're not too dirty, that's what I put on.

Why did you wear a white Batman suit to Kim and Kanye's wedding and to your prom?

I wore the Batman suit to heighten my experience, which was fun. But also at the wedding, I felt as though I needed to protect everyone there and needed to have the proper gear to do so.

Do you have a favorite *Fresh Prince* look?

My dad went on national television with a crop top on, showing his belly button, and to this day he regrets it. That's my favorite *Fresh Prince* outfit by far.

Who are your style icons?

My style icons are Batman, Robin, Nightwing, Superman, and Kanye West.



**The Knight in
Suited Armor**

Beckham's tailored gear is all about balance: Copy the way his small shirt collar, small tie knot, and narrow jacket lapels all work as a team.

↓
↓
↓
RULE NO. 17
KEEP EVOLVING LIKE MARK RONSON



2001

THE STAR ANNOTATES HIS
SARTORIAL DEVELOPMENT

DJ Days: "There was a downtown dress code: Air Max, jeans, and a T-shirt from Supreme."

Going Platinum: "I'm gonna blame it on being wasted for most of that year."

Older, Wiser, Chiller: "I used to be quite extreme, like: I'm only going to wear one thing for the next year. But now it's like, Fuck it. I've tried to loosen up on those things."



2010



2011

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RULE NO. 18
GO AHEAD, BE THE BAD GUY
LIKE MARIO BALOTELLI



The Allen Iverson of European football is erratic on the field and a walking PR disaster off it. But the dude has game: In drop-crotch pants and a sideways snapback, Balotelli is a joyous bane to crusty old footie fans and a hero to a legion of fanboy style bloggers. When we asked Balotelli who his best-dressed teammate is, he said, simply, "Me." Hey, you can't be public enemy number one if you don't have ridiculous swagger.

MORE
Extended interviews
and tons more swervy
street-style shots
GQ.COM

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RULE NO. 19
GET YOUR
GENTLEMAN ON
LIKE DAVID
BECKHAM

Sure, he pioneered badass hairdos and sleeve tattoos, but Beckham proves that punk-rock trappings look best when paired with the refinement of a totally dialed-in suit. He's not just on this year's Most Stylish list, he's destined for our suit-game Hall of Fame.

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RULE NO. 20
OUTDRESS
THE OLD GUARD
LIKE EDDIE
REDMAYNE

If you're sniffing into your silk hankie because Clooney isn't on this list, may we introduce you to Eddie Redmayne? At 33, he has an Oscar and an ace tailor—and knows more about how to wear a suit than at least ten of *Ocean's Eleven*. The red carpet is looking brighter than ever.



JULY 2015 GQ.COM



Lauren
Greenfield

Make It Reign: How an Atlanta Strip Club Runs the Music Industry

To call it a mere strip club means you don't get it. It's more like hip-hop's ultimate proving ground—a legendary hive of hustlers and dreamers. **MAGIC CITY** is a place where fortunes rain from the rafters, where women with impossible bodies call the shots, and where a DJ who spins your track can make you a star. **DEVIN FRIEDMAN** explores the mixed-up, magical world within America's most important club





PART ONE: "MAGIC CITY IS EVERYTHING"

The first dude I really talked to at Magic City was a man who goes by the name City Dollars.

He was installed at a table in the back on a Monday night. I bet City Dollars figured that I was in some way a guy who could help him. He said come have a seat with me, man, right here. He was full of good cheer tonight, full of enterprise, full of love for life, a man who sees nothing but avenues and angles and opportunities.

"This is Magic City," he said. "Magic City is everything." Then he ordered me a beer.

City Dollars is 38, wears a woolly chin beard, and has eyes that twinkle from deep in his skull. "I'm a hustler," City Dollars told me. A hustler and a player and a manager of rap artists. He's also, he said, the proprietor of an auto-detailing business out by Atlanta Hartsfield. Tonight he'd brought one of his artists with him, Yung Stunt. Seated next to us at the table, Yung Stunt looked like he could have been 16 years old. He wore sunglasses, and for all I knew he was asleep. "I want to expose him to this!" City Dollars told me. "I want him to breathe this air. To be around these people. This is what I do for my artists, I give them that rock-star life." He drank from his beer. "They're called the Narly Dudes, by the way. YouTube that shit."

A song called "Make Sum Shake" was on. The music you hear in Magic City isn't the music you might expect at a strip club. Magic City Mondays are the most important nights in the most important club in the most important city in the hip-hop industry. Magic City is the place where you hear music before anyone else does, and where it is decided if that music gets played anywhere else. "Make Sum Shake," the lyrics of which are mostly *Make sum shake*, is by a group called Cool Amerika, a few kids about 20 years old from the suburban hood of Stone Mountain, Georgia—and it was one of a handful of songs that seemed ready to break out of the strip club.

"You have to be in here every week if you want to do something in the rap game," City Dollars was telling me about Magic City Mondays. "You get the finest females in the state of Georgia. You get the Who's Who of the streets in here. You can have Young Thug, Future, 2 Chainz in here on the same night," he said, naming three of the hottest rappers in America right now, all of whom came out of Atlanta. "And you get DJ Esco. If Esco play your record...? Everything Esco touch out here is off the charts."

Then City Dollars took some bills from a stack and threw them at a naked woman who was standing in front of us. It was only then I realized that we were in the midst of getting a table dance. It is easy to forget, sometimes, that Magic City is a strip club.

We sat without talking, like we were waiting for something. It was early still. Most of the dancers were smoking languorously in the back corner, waiting for the club to fill up. The strippers: the piercings, the overgrown indecipherable tattoos, the wigs in their full spectrum of colors and lengths, the lounging of flesh against vinyl.

Occasionally, City Dollars threw some singles at the naked woman standing in front of us, the way an old man might absentmindedly feed some ducks the crust of his sandwich. This particular dancer had on white high-heeled lace-up booties, and she had a special trick. She could bend over at the waist so far that her face appeared again between her legs and she could look up at you and wink. Her pelvic bone, reversed, formed a flat mesa of flesh so that her vagina and anus pointed directly up at the ceiling. This was Aimee. I would get to know her later.

When the dance ended, Aimee began sweeping her money into a neat pile. But meanwhile, the club had changed. It was midnight, and the club was filling up quickly now. Men came in groups. Two or three together in denim and baseball hats. Ten men in hooded sweatshirts. One by one the dancers extinguished their blunts and

came from their corner, down onto the main floor like crows dropping off a wire to check out some roadkill. DJ Outta Space was here. The producer Southside, who makes beats for Jay Z and Gucci Mane, and the producer TM88, who makes beats for Young Thug, and Coach Tek, who manages 2 Chainz, and the taciturn guys who travel with the rap group Migos—the eccentric insular little band of rappers out of Gwinnett County, Georgia, who live in a McMansion in exurban Atlanta with their weapons cache and wall-to-wall carpeting. T.I. would make an appearance later; he's known to bring his own backpack full of dollar bills to throw. Radio deejays would arrive as well, listening to hear which new songs are *making the club move* and *who's beefing with who*. And: dope boys who want to be rappers; rappers who pretend to be dope boys; dope boys who

just want to be dope boys; the married proprietor of a debt-collection agency, I think his name was Chuck (very nice guy), whose wife gives him a free pass once a month to come and look at naked ladies; a woman in a T-shirt that says **TURNING UP IS MY CARDIO**. (FYI: Don't be confused, *dope boy* just basically means drug dealer.)

Rico Richie, an artist trying to make it in the city, was up on the stage now, throwing \$5,000 while his song played. There was a young NFL player in the back, quietly bursting out of a white Henley while showering two dancers with cash. Magic City had \$80,000 in singles in a basement safe for people to "order up" and throw—on strippers, near strippers, on the floor—and the club will go through all of it tonight and have to begin recycling those singles, taking them down to the basement to be processed by two guys with money-counting machines under fluorescent lights.

When Rico was off the stage, Esco put on a track called "Preach" by a southern rapper named Young Dolph, a song made with the Atlanta producer Zaytoven, and the club began to *move*:

Zay got the motherfucking bass thumpin'

Dolph got the motherfucking trap jumpin'

City Dollars said: "Now you're seeing how it happens at Magic City."

Stunt had stood up. He was looking out over the crowd. Tomorrow I would visit City Dollars and discover that his auto-detailing business is a black pickup truck with a pressure washer in the bed. He parks it in the back of a Chili's on Camp Creek Parkway and does car washes there. Yung Stunt would tell me he dropped out of McClarin Success Academy, "an alternative school for bad kids." He has a



Strip-tionary

Magic City is a world unto itself. In order to unlock the deep meaning and nuances—to explain the lexicon of the place—we turned to Esco, the club's most notorious DJ.

—CLAY SKIPPER

FLEXIN':

THE ACT OF MASQUERADING AS IF YOU WERE OF GREATER MEANS THAN YOU TRULY ARE
"He be here in the club all the time, he ain't never spend no money, now he sees Future and now he's gonna order up \$1,000? He flexin'."

O.G. STRIPPER:
A VETERAN DANCER WHO HAS EARNED THE RESPECT OF HER PEERS

"Those are like the originals. [Dancers] comin' in at like 18. Three years is really like nine years. You're 27, but you're O.G. because you're like 40 in strip years."

ORDERIN' UP:
PROCURING \$1 BILLS IN ORDER TO GIVE THEM TO STRIPPERS
"People might be like, 'Man, we turned up at Magic's last night!' But they mighta only ordered up \$100... Under \$1,000 isn't orderin' up for me, personally."



If you make it out of Magic City, you may end up, like the rapper Future, at a mansion in Beverly Hills.

6-month-old child. When I asked him if he's living *that rock-star life*, he would say, *Hell no*. When I asked him where he lives, he would say, "I don't really live anywhere, I guess. My mama house, my grandma, my baby mama." But I don't believe Yung Stunt was thinking about any of that right now. The kid had seemed comatose to me a minute ago, but he'd been awakened. He couldn't stop smiling. He was wearing sunglasses, but from the side you could see his eyes, and an actual single tear came down his cheek. He'd seen something new tonight. He'd been taken somewhere. This is a trip to the moon for Yung Stunt.

"It's a movie," he kept saying. For those of us not familiar with the current argot of Atlanta rappers—and you shouldn't be embarrassed about that—a *movie* is when something truly memorable happens to you, when a fantasy springs from your mind's eye onto, for instance, the sticky greige carpeting at Magic City. "It's a motherfucking movie."

PART TWO: BIG MAGIC

Man. Atlanta. The I-75 and the I-85. The 20 and the 285. The roads to Alabama and to Macon.

The roads to Florida and to South Carolina. The heavy foliage. The little wooded hollows right in the city. The cancerous urban sprawl. The unremarkable skyscrapers in their copses at Buckhead, at Midtown. The lack of any orienting landmark. The front porches, the moisture-soaked clapboards, the darkened attic windows. The factories where they used to build one thing or another. The lone man, tall and stick-figured like a locust, loping across the intersection and into an urban meadow. The man sleeping in the black lung of the underpass. The rich black people with their muscular metal cars. The rich white people with their slacks and loafers and frail ankles. Commuters released onto freeways at the pace of an IV drip by timed green lights

at on-ramps. The sponge of the city absorbing country motherfuckers, absorbing people fleeing Chicago and Gary, Indiana, absorbing anyone with a hustle as Atlanta expands.

Magic City is a low concrete box glowing neon blue in the dark, nestled among a menagerie of unloved civic necessities downtown: the Greyhound station, the city detention center, disintegrating highway overpasses, shelters for the drug-addicted and mentally ill. But inside that concrete box, everything flows from the ethos of Magic himself, the founder of Magic City.

On the bigger nights at Magic City, you can find Magic patrolling the room in a taupe suit, parting the clouds of hookah smoke with a wineglass in his fist. His trim hair going gray, his lantern jaw set. He played football on scholarship at Duke and at age 60 still has the bearing of a man who knows he's physically more powerful than other people. He is called Big Mag, pronounced "big maj" (Lil Magic is his son), and he is an elder statesman of the street. Atlanta is balkanized—you might not be welcome in Bankhead if you're not from there. But as the proprietor of Magic City, as a man who has, in his parlance, been running around in the streets for thirty years, it's different for Magic. He can pass safely into any zone he likes; he can talk to almost anyone like family. "I've got a green card," he says. "You might be a dope boy or a producer or a famous rapper or a finesser or a millionaire or a thug, but it wouldn't take me a couple of phone calls to get your mama or your uncle or your people on the phone."

Magic, with his lieutenants Wolf and Charles Walker, has been running Magic City for three decades—with an eight-year hiatus when he was in federal prison on a drug charge. Wolf, the fixer, the back-of-the-house guy whom you can usually find in the basement office with his bifocals fastened to the top of his bald head, so hairless I could not detect the presence even of eyebrows. In the front of the house: Charles Walker, the Silver Fox, widely acknowledged to be the smoothest 67-year-old in Fulton County. Soft close-cropped silver hair brushed into waves, pressed pinstriped suit and well-knotted tie. He works in, I guess you could call it, stripper relations, and he keeps up a steady patter with (text continued on page 68)





These pages, far left, from top: Big Magic, the founder of Magic City (left), along with one of his lieutenants, Wolf (right), and the rapper T.I. (center); Lil Magic, who grew up in the club, handling some of the \$80,000 in \$1 bills that will circulate through Magic City on a good night; Esco, the club's Monday-night DJ, one of the most powerful hitmakers in the Atlanta rap scene. Other photographs: The dancers, artists, workers, and hustlers that make Magic City Mondays.





The rap duo Cool Amerika, with their road manager Kingpin (left). Opposite, the veteran stripper OG India, appreciating the craft.

basically every woman who walks into Magic City, employed there or not. He is also probably one of the few senior-citizen strip-club managers with a preschool-age child.

Magic, like Wolf and Charles, is a certain vintage of gentleman. An older dude who does not suffer fools gladly. That rare type of avuncular figure who, on one hand, would scold you if you littered on the street and on the other hand would sit you down and explain with authority and enthusiasm the preferred method for eating a piece of pussy. And it is in Big Mag's image that Magic City is constructed.

Magic's club is not fancy. It has a simple stage, a bar with some coolers behind it, a kitchen at the front that turns out hot wings and chicken and rice in Styrofoam boxes. There's no gilt, no crystal, no \$40,000 mirrors cut in the shape of a bosom. There are no private rooms. Because private rooms violate the primary purpose of Magic City, which is to be seen. "It's a hype place," Big Mag says. "It's not a sex place. A sex place wouldn't bring anything but trouble, plus I wouldn't get any of the money for that sex, either."

Atlanta gets referred to frequently as Black Hollywood. It is, like Los Angeles and New York, a city in which no small number of celebrities feel it is important to maintain a presence. You're as likely to find Kanye in Atlanta as anywhere else; Kevin Hart celebrated his engagement at Magic City; Rick Ross just bought the old Evander Holyfield twelve-bedroom mansion down in Fayetteville. Atlanta is, especially, the de facto center of the hip-hop industry, and it is Magic City—and the small number of strip clubs like it—that operates as the underground linchpin of that industry. If hip-hop were Silicon Valley, Magic City would be the place venture capitalists would loiter, looking for talent. "Ninety-nine percent of the time, the



SAUCE:
AN INTANGIBLE
QUALITY THAT MAKES
YOU STAND OUT IN
THE CLUB

"Atlanta's all about sauce now. Swag is dead. You gotta have sauce. You gotta have the right clothes on. You gotta have the hair right."

TURN UP:
THE ACT OF
BECOMING ENTHUSIASTIC
WHILE IN THE CLUB

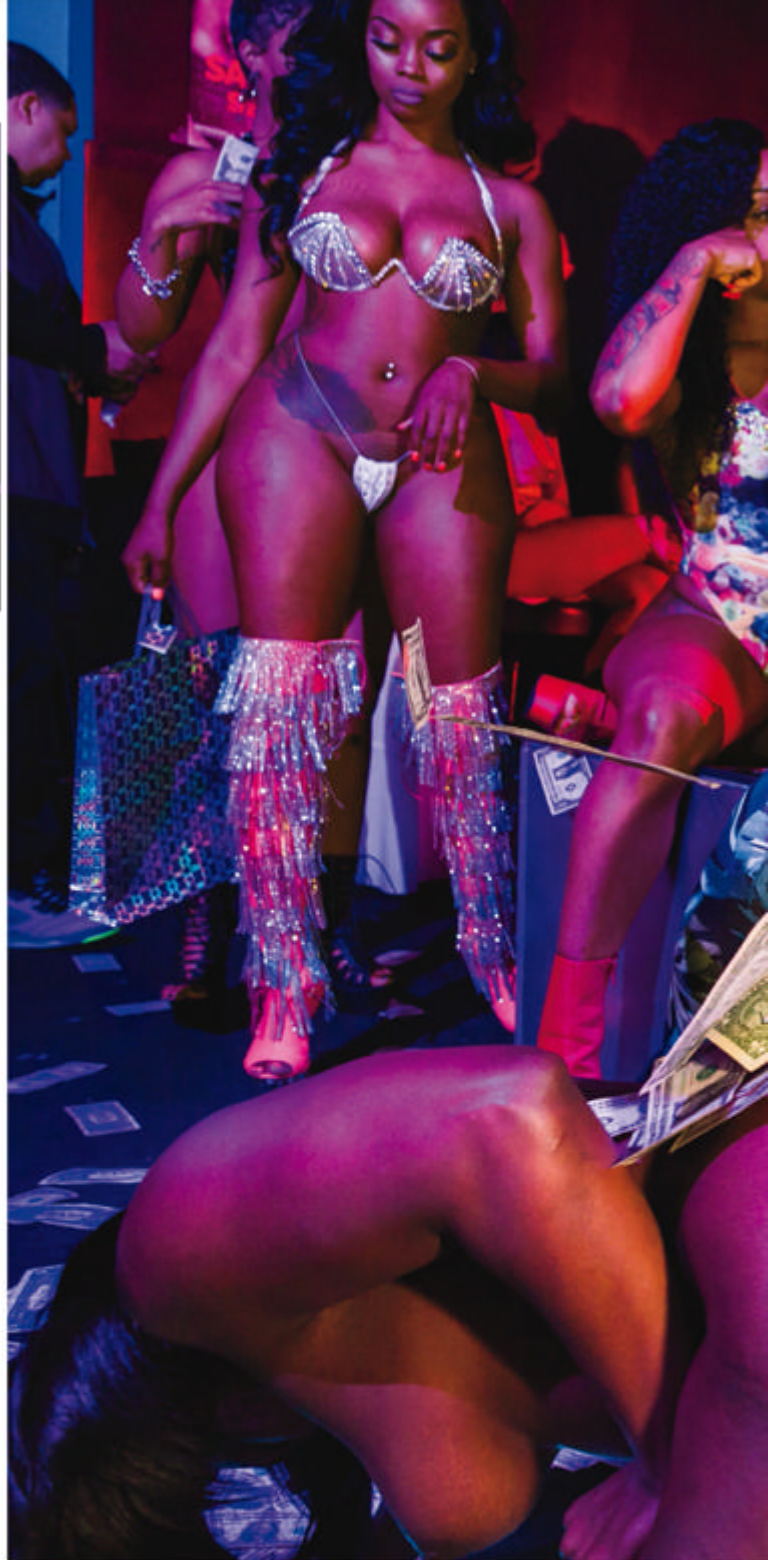
"When you turning up, you're on the way up. From 0 to 10, you might be on a 2, and I'm like, 'Man, turn up!' That means you need to get to a 6."

TURNT:
HAVING ACHIEVED
A STATE OF
ENTHUSIASM

"If you're turnt, that means you're a 9."

TOO TURNT UP (TTU):
A STATE OF GOING
TOO WILD

"If you passed turnt, you finna pass out! Slow down! You too turnt up!"



first place you ever heard a song is Magic City," said DJ Esco, who, when it comes to music, pretty much controls Magic City.

"Everybody who's big in the strip club?" J-Nicks, the FM radio host, said. "They break out of the strip club."

"If you want to make it in Atlanta," the producer TM88 said, "you need to live in Magic City."

Consider the rapper Future. Not five years ago, Future was virtually unknown. He used to hang out at Magic City every week, back near the DJ booth. Esco started playing Future's music. Esco started playing his music a lot. Eventually Future started to dominate Magic City. And when he started dominating Magic City, suddenly he was played on the radio; suddenly he signed a major record deal. Suddenly, Future became a guy who gets engaged to Ciara and takes her to sit in the front row at Milan Fashion Week.



But at the same time, Big Mag wants no velvet ropes in Magic City, because the point here is *not* to separate by class. “It’s gumbo in there,” Esco told me. “You can see actresses, musicians, a weed man, a killer, probably a police officer. You can find anybody in Magic City, anybody.” It’s a place where part of the clientele can fantasize that they’re still *street* while a different part of the clientele can fantasize that they’re not. I can’t think of another place in America where the one percent stand unprotected next to so many other percents at the bar. And all those elements are held together by respect for the institution Big Mag has created, by the collective ego of a whole room full of people who are dying to be seen, and by a common fantasy—they’re all making the same *movie*. They are also held together, Magic would argue, by the power of booty, which was Magic’s first real business innovation.

“**WHAT HAPPENED IS,**” he told me when I asked him how he came to open Magic City, “I fell in love with strip.”

Magic was born Michael Barney in the ghetto metropolis of Camden, New Jersey. He began working as a salesman in Atlanta in the 1980s. “I was selling printer cartridges over the phone,” he says. “It was a scam.” He was so good that his co-workers called him Magic. Magic worked on commission, and once he had some of that money in his pockets, he says, he liked to “run around in the streets.” It was then—circa early 1980s—that he happened upon a black strip club called Foxy Lady.

“It was rough. It was one of those kind of motorcycle clubs. But I fell in love with strip right then.”

What was it you fell in love with?

“I was just amazed at the atmosphere. It was the first time I ever experienced strip down here in the (continued on page 99)



-->

suit \$1,045

Boss

+

shirt \$88

J.Crew Crosby

tie \$25

Brooklyn Tie Company

tie bar (throughout)

The Tie Bar

pocket square

Alex Mill

bracelet

Tateossian

watch

Boca MMXII

location

Nomad Coffee

--> -->

suit (right) \$3,095

Ermenegildo Zegna

+

shirt \$145

Michael Kors

tie \$150

Alexander Olch

pocket square

Brunello Cucinelli

watch

Uniform Wares

backpack

Louis Vuitton

street

Carrer de la Perla

THE UNDISPUTED LIGHTWEIGHT CHAMPION OF THE SUMMER

📷 NATHANIEL GOLDBERG

--> Yes, cotton suits are still cool this summer. (A thousand times yes.) But you know what's even cooler? Linen suits, both because they're impossibly breezy and because they're the underdog after years of being ignored by modern designers. We flew to Barcelona with upstart British actor **CALLUM TURNER** to show you what these suits are made of



Who the Hell Is Callum Turner?

Good question! The London-based 25-year-old is a model turned actor who looks like a sexy prep-school dropout and who is, so far, making a career of jumping from Burberry campaigns to, um, literary adaptations. On the docket: *Victor Frankenstein*,

in which he'll play the valiant foil to James McAvoy's mad doctor and Daniel Radcliffe's henchman. And he just returned from Russia, where he shot *War and Peace*—he's the czarist playboy Anatole Kuragin, or, as he puts it: "Basically Justin Bieber 200 years ago."

—LAUREN LARSON

And What's Up with Those Suits?

Linen has been around forever (shout-out to Ramses II, Egyptian pharaoh and lightweight-fabric pioneer!), but suit designers have had it on the back burner for the past couple of thousand years. Until this

season, that is, when everyone from Armani to Zegna applied their suiting expertise to the one summer fabric that'll keep your back from sweating and your underarms from stanking. A linen suit softens over time and looks better with some rumples. Just wear it, air it out, and wear it some more.

suit \$2,290
Burberry Prorsum
+
shirt \$345
Hamilton Shirts
tie \$195
Charvet
loafers \$595
Tod's
pocket square
The Tie Bar
watch
South Lane
museum
MACBA



suit \$3,190
Giorgio Armani
 +
 shirt \$460
Thom Browne
New York
 tie \$150
Alexander Olch
 pocket square
Brunello Cucinelli
 sunglasses
Newman
 bar
Châtelet





suit \$2,580

Michael Bastian

+

shirt \$332

Etro

tie \$175

Dolce & Gabbana

shoes \$345

Walk-Over

pocket square

The Tie Bar

watch

Timex

hat

Barbisio at

FlameKeepers

Hat Club

restaurant

Chez Cocó

suit \$255
Perry Ellis
+
shirt \$145
Michael Kors
tie \$160
Salvatore Piccolo
sneakers \$200
New Balance
pocket square
Brooks Brothers
hotel
W Barcelona
hair by vi sapyypapy
at management +
artists. grooming
by jaume polo.
contributing stylist:
kelly mccabe at art
department. local
production by bcn
skies productions.
where to buy it?
go to gq.com/go/fashiondirectories



TRUE
Detective

SPOTLIGHT

GQ

76 July 2015



SEE ADDITIONAL CREDITS.

AS IF YOU NEEDED ANOTHER REASON TO TUNE IN TO THE SUPER-SECRET, WILDLY ANTICIPATED, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA-CENTERED **#TRUEDETECTIVESEASON2**, MEET **ADRIA ARJONA** AND **LEVEN RAMBIN**, THE SHOW'S YOUNG WOMEN—LOVE INTERESTS? GOOD GUYS? BAD GUYS? WHO KNOWS?—WHO ARE BURNING TO BREAK OUT

📷 Mark Abrahams



...**THERE'S ONLY ONE** *True Detective* spoiler you're going to get here: The two women photographed on these pages *never appear in a scene together*. This photo shoot was in fact the first time Adria Arjona and Leven Rambin met. Despite that, they're in lockstep with their cultish protectiveness over the show and its shadowy processes. Shooting for the second season involved the kind of security measures usually reserved for Special Ops and Beyoncé albums. Actors learned lines through a password-protected app. Pages had to be turned in at the end of each day of shooting. The only trailer for a while contained no spoken dialogue. At the mention of a rumored orgy scene, they sweetly asked, "What orgy scene?" When we asked Arjona if she could share anything about her character besides that she's Taylor Kitsch's girlfriend, she went quiet. "I'm so scared," she said—and seemed legitimately so.

"I always refuse to do everything," she said earlier. "I would tell my agents, 'I won't do this—unless it's *True Detective*.' 'I won't do that—unless it's *True Detective*.' When I finally got it, they said, 'Well, you have to do whatever they tell you.'" So, nudity? *There's* another sorta-spoiler.

Since the first rule of *True Detective* is don't talk about *True Detective*, we played Fuck Marry Kill instead. They begged off breaking down the current cast but were willing to go a round with last season's. Rambin: "You know who I'd fuck? Daddario." (Alexandra Daddario played Woody Harrelson's mistress. Also, boobs.) Arjona: "Yesss. Yes, me, too." Marry? Arjona: "I think I'd marry McConaughey." Rambin: "Settle down in Austin. Good life." And kill? Arjona: "Ummm..." Rambin: "The bad guy!" Arjona: "The bad guy. Thank you for saving me. The bad guy."—SARAH GOLDSTEIN

... From left ...

ADRIA ARJONA and
LEVEN RAMBIN

HOW TO WEAR SHORTS

Without looking like a Boy Scout, a German tourist, or some guy from Burning Man

📺 ERIC RAY DAVIDSON



SUN-FADED
AND FRAYED

From barbecues to the beach, try shorts that look like you've owned them a decade—even if you bought them that way last week.

--> We're Here to Solve Your Shorts Conundrums

It should be so simple: Pull on a nice pair and go, right? But it turns out shorts are one of the trickiest pieces of clothing for men to get right. Because: Can I wear them in town? Am I really supposed to show some thigh? And what about patterns, cutoffs, and cargo pockets? Here, we answer all your questions—after trying on 416 pairs to find the 13 we like the best.

1

TO BE CLEAR: THIS IS THE LENGTH YOU WANT

Take a good, hard look. These shorts represent the 2015 ideal: cut with class, slim leg-openings, and an eight-and-a-half-inch inseam so they hit just above your knee.

shorts \$90
Polo Ralph Lauren
+

henley shirt
Polo Ralph Lauren
bracelets, from left
Del Toro / Tateossian
Degs & Sal (silver)
watch **Boca MMXII**
sunglasses
Warby Parker

SEERSUCKER

To wear seersucker without any of the fratty baggage, stay away from baby blue and white.

2

YOU CAN DO BETTER THAN JUST A T-SHIRT

There's nothing inherently lazy or inappropriate about a man in shorts—even in the big city. But it helps if you build the look out with all the fixings—a shirt with a collar, a narrow belt, dress shoes...

shorts \$175
Michael Kors
+

shirt **The Kooples**
belt **Gant by Michael**
Bastian / shoes
Church's / necklace
and bracelets **Miansai**

3

ALL HAIL THE PRINTS

Palm-tree-patterned pants? Maybe not. But with shorts: Yes, you can.

-->

shorts \$530
Marc Jacobs

+

shirt **Gitman Vintage**
loafers **Allen Edmonds**
bracelets, from top
David Yurman
Vince Camuto

--> -->

shorts, from top
Closed \$189
Tommy Hilfiger \$89
Scotch & Soda \$119



SHORTS ADVICE FROM A MAN OF STYLE

“

Anything with a small pattern feels of-the-moment; we do plaids and tartans and gingham checks, which are a bit quirky and unexpected. The rule book was thrown away years back: If it makes you feel good, wear it. Just keep everything else you're wearing simple.”
—Tommy Hilfiger

4



5



6



7

THE BAN ON CARGO SHORTS IS OFFICIALLY LIFTED



Finally, the Great Slimming of menswear gets around to cargo shorts. This pair by Off-White (the label designed by Kanye's creative director, Virgil Abloh) requires, oh, about half the cotton used to make the ones Fred Durst once wore. And if you're not into the streetwear thing, they'd look just as good with an oxford.

shorts \$446
Off-White c/o Virgil Abloh

+

hoodie **John Elliott + Co** / sneakers **Nike**
hat **Kangol**
watch **TAG Heuer**
bracelet **Tateossian**

<--

shorts \$118
AG

8





<--

9

DRESS SHORTS: NOT AN OXYMORON

If your shorts have the same details as your sharpest chinos (see that nifty waist tab?), you can add a tie and not look like the guitarist from AC/DC.

shorts \$198
Steven Alan

+

shirt **Dsquared2**
tie **The Tie Bar**
watch **Hamilton**
bracelets, from top
George Frost / Miansai

-->

10

PUT YOUR SWEATPANTS IN STORAGE UNTIL FALL

And turn to their summer cousins for all your exercise and loungewear needs.

shorts \$85
Sundek

+

tank top **Go Softwear**
sunglasses **Ray-Ban**
necklace **Miansai**
bracelet **Maison**
Martin Margiela
wristband **Lacoste**



11

NEVER BUY GOLF SHORTS AT THE PRO SHOP

It's just *golf*—you don't need high-tech performance gear. A pair of regular gingham shorts and (*ta-dah!*) you're the most stylish dude in the clubhouse.

shorts \$60
Izod

+

polo shirt **Marc Jacobs**
hat **Orvis**
necklace and bracelet
David Yurman
watch **Rolex**

grooming by sussy
campos. still-life
styling by trina ong at
halley resources.

where to buy it?
go to gq.com/go/fashiondirectories



12

THE BARGAIN OF THE ISSUE

Hey, penny-pinching billionaires and broke college students alike: These cheap-as-hell Dockers Alpha shorts have that slim GQ fit in countless bangin' colors. Don't think twice.

shorts \$58
Dockers

-->



<--

13

INTRODUCING: THE ESSENTIAL HYBRID

This quick-drying shorts/swim-trunks combo will cover you from the ocean to lunch and off to a backyard keg party without leaving you soggy or in need of a change.

shorts \$125
M.Nii





MIGUEL

ROC

--> MIGUEL is one of the leaders of a new kind of R&B music that's more gritty than cheesy—think Prince, not Color Me Badd—and the explicitly sex-obsessed singer is known as much for putting stylish clothes on as for taking them off. So we got the native Angeleno to show us all the new ways to get rock-star style in an era when you don't have to be Axl or Slash to cop the look

SOUTHWEST STYLE HITS CENTER STAGE

Rock 'n' roll fashion has many iterations in 2015. One big one: the high-desert look that's going full tilt from the kids at Coachella to urban cowboys crossing South Broadway.

jacket \$4,790
Saint Laurent by Hedi Slimane

+

shirt \$570
scarf \$325
jeans \$470
boots \$1,995
wallet chain (at MrPorter.com)
belt and hat
Saint Laurent by Hedi Slimane

rings
**Chrome Hearts (silver)
Degs & Sal**

location
**Ace Hotel Downtown
Los Angeles**

KS

A man with dark hair and a beard is sitting on a bright red, tufted leather chair. He is wearing a black blazer over a white shirt with a bold red and black pattern. He is smiling at the camera. The background shows a restaurant or food market setting with stainless steel counters, a cash register, and other people working in the background. The man is wearing a black suit, a patterned shirt, and dark loafers. He is sitting on a red chair. The background is a restaurant or food market.

AMPLIFY YOUR BLACK SUIT

You don't see a lot of musicians wearing ties right now. But suits? They're always in play. (Just ask Nick Cave.)

suit \$1,940
Givenchy by Riccardo Tisci at MrPorter.com

+
shirt \$495
Marc Jacobs

loafers \$595
Gucci

bracelets, left, from top
Beneath the Roses
Le Gramme
Saint Laurent by
Hedi Slimane

bracelet, right
David Yurman

location
Belcampo Meat Co. at
Grand Central Market

PEOPLE DO NOT make love to Miguel's songs. "People fuck to my songs," corrects the R&B singer, and yes, we can confirm: His hits are sonic vibrators. Since he started taking over Spotify stations and *Billboard* charts with "Sure Thing" in 2010, he's been a staple of the so-called sex mix. When he performed "Adorn," one of his most sensual jams, at the Grammys in 2013, it seemed momentarily iffy whether the crowd would keep their clothes on. (He took home a statue that night, too.) "I say things the way that we want to say them as men, and I think women can respect that because it's honest."

Which is to say, listen to Miguel croon *pillow talk turns into sweet dreams / sweet dreams turns into fucking in the morning* on his third album, *Wildheart*, and know that he is being sincere. "My girl and I wake up every day together," says Miguel, who, in the grand tradition of artists who make bedroom bangers, goes by just one name. He's been with singer/model Nazanin Mandi for a decade now, but he intimates that just because he is committed doesn't mean he's boring. Miguel recently suggested to a Hot 97 deejay that he still engages in threesomes—but only when they are "special." "When you've experienced sex when it is wild, when it is very spontaneous, with someone that you share something in common with, even when it's different people, it's brilliant," he says. "And all that went into this new album. I was trying to tell the story of my energy, mostly the more primal side."

These days, the platinum-selling artist channels whatever primal energy he has left over after waking up with Mandi into riding his motorcycle. "I started late, but I have found it requires all your attention and focus," he says. "There's no 'Let me check my texts,' 'Let me see what's going on on Instagram.' It's just you and your bike, that you manipulate with your hands." It should surprise no one that Miguel is also great with his hands.—RACHEL SYME

LIFE'S MORE INTERESTING ON THE FRINGES

There's pedigree in L.A. rockers co-opting country: First it was the Eagles and CSNY. Now, Miguel.

jacket \$7,590
Tom Ford

+
henley \$1,990
Tom Ford

jeans \$179
Stampd

boots \$395
Maxwell Snow

belt
Saint Laurent by Hedi Slimane

necklace and brass cuff (right)
George Frost

brass link bracelet
LHN Jewelry

location
The Last Bookstore

A BETTER, BOLDER BOMBER JACKET

Leather is always cool, but the next-level shit is a satin Vietnam-era flight jacket. (Goes great with: ripped jeans, bad attitude.)

jacket \$398

Diesel

+

t-shirt \$128

Hiro Clark

jeans \$1,480

Balmain

sneakers \$75

Adidas Originals

sunglasses and
silver-feather cuff
**Saint Laurent by
Hedi Slimane**

triangle necklace
and golden rings
Degs & Sal

coin necklace,
his own

silver chain and floral ring
Chrome Hearts

square ring
Topman

link bracelet
David Yurman

artists (mural)
Ralph Ordaz
Richard Koo
Flip Green Flowers
Diana C. Munoz Lang

artist (bottom right)
Teacher





↑ THIS MOVE STILL WORKS EVERY TIME

The most polished of the rock 'n' roll looks dates from the 1950s, when slim-fit cardigans and spit-shined loafers made a man look dangerous. (Note: They still do.)

cardigan \$1,750
Bottega Veneta

+

shirt \$50
Topman

pants \$785
Gucci

loafers \$595
Tod's

bracelet (right),
dress and heels
**Saint Laurent by
Hedi Slimane**

restaurant
Bestia, 2121 7th Place

↗ MIGUEL'S OTHER BIKE IS A HARLEY

In blue and white, this sweater would be nautical. But the magic of blood-red-and-black is that it can toughen up anything. (Even a cruiser bike.)

sweater \$590
**Saint Laurent by
Hedi Slimane**

+

jeans \$179
Stampd

boots
**Saint Laurent by
Hedi Slimane**

sunglasses
Salt Optics

her sneakers
**Topshop for Adidas
Originals**

bike
TokyoBike + Ace Hotel

location
**Apolis: Common
Gallery**

-->

THE ONE-MAN BARBERSHOP QUARTET

For that new-school doo-wop look, find a barber who can give your hair both attitude *and* altitude.

polo shirt \$325
Versus Versace

+

pants \$140
Topman

loafers
Tod's

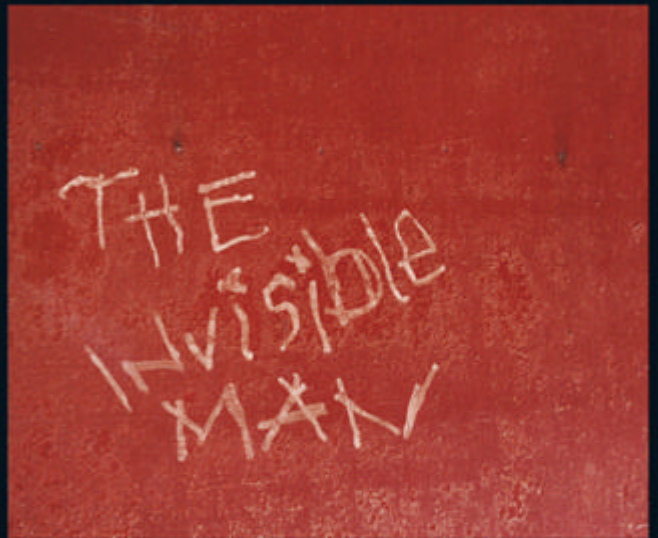
bracelets, from left
**Chrome Hearts
George Frost
Degs & Sal**

location
Bolt Barbers

grooming by sussy
campos. woman's hair
by eric gabriel using
wella; makeup by dawn
broussard at the wall
group. produced by tricia
sherman for bauerfeind
productions-west.

where to buy it?
go to qq.com/go/fashiondirectories





YOU MAY HAVE MISSED the name **Charly Keunang** amid all the news stories of unarmed African-American men—Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray—killed by police. Charly was just another anonymous homeless man on the streets of L.A.'s Skid Row. But when he was shot by →



→ LAPD this March, he became yet another dismal statistic: at least the 175th death at the hands of an officer this year. **Jeff Sharlet** embeds on Skid Row (a.k.a. a police “containment” zone) and re-creates a life whose only public recognition is in the tragic way that it ended - 📷 **Pieter Hugo**



←
As explanation for the shooting, the police would later say that Charly had reached for an officer's weapon.

→
Heleine Tchayou, Charly's mother, holds a photograph of him as a student in Cameroon, before Paris, before America, before Skid Row.

battered paperback you study, learning the lines, reading them aloud. *Come, seeling night...*

The street throbbing. Gospel booming from Miss Mecca's corner store, radios rolling by in wheelchairs. *I'm a boss-ass bitch, bitch, bitch* on repeat, and so many ancient songs, Public Enemy, N.W.A, and

O **PEN YOUR EYES.** Sunday. Another lucky day. Darkness. A luxury afforded the man who owns two tents, one popped right inside the other. No street light filtering in, no headlights rising along tent walls. Just—dark. You could be anywhere. Your father's house, before dawn, in Cameroon, or Paris, or Berlin. Or America. Stretch: You want to run, the canyon, your long legs striding, up out of the city until you reach the vista. L.A. You'll close your eyes and feel the sun on your face, and in your mind a movie will roll, the film of all that is yet to come. You've always been gifted like this, granted stories and the power to believe them. *Merci*, you think. *Thank you, God.* Blessed with this body. Lean. "Very, very strong," says your sister, Line, the other half of who you are.

Open your eyes. March 1, 2015. Sunday. You need to call her. *Bonne nuit*, you texted her last night. Every day you text her. *I'll call tomorrow, my heart, my dear.*

Darkness. Silence. Earplugs: You don't hear the street begin to breathe. The tent people and the blanket people, the single-room-occupancy people coming out for prayer and breakfast at the missions, the stay-awake-all-night dancing-in-place-for-twenty-hours tweaking people, the flat-out face-down sidewalk people. The corner men who piss at the foot of the two-story glass cross on the side of the mission. The cross that brought you to this corner.

Sunday, Skid Row, Los Angeles, America. This is where you are. On a mattress in a tent on the sidewalk. You flick on your flashlight. Taped to your walls, photographs of Africa you cut from magazines. A picture of Beyoncé— isn't that a woman. Stretch: You're going nowhere today. But your body remains strong, muscle at the shoulder, tapered at the waist, a 43-year-old man still elegantly drawn. "Tall beautiful black king," your friend Moonchild says. You feel like one some days. When the chemistry is right, crystal raising you up, spice shifting you sideways. When you feel like you can vision your way home, over the ocean.

Zip the tents open, smell the street. Zoom into the right-now-right-here, crouching on your milk crate in front of the tents and staring down at the sidewalk you sweep and sweep until you break the broom, and then how can you keep it clean? "Tall beautiful black king." You don't feel like that now. So you take up the play. *Macbeth*. A

older music, music from the listeners' last good days, the Dramatics, Marvin Gaye, voices that balloon into the evening like a pop-up living room. The mission workers think Skid Row gets worse at night, but they're wrong. It's better. The cool air tamps down the fumes. The tents rise.

You read out loud; *loud*. Maybe it's the chemistry. End of the month, money dried up, everybody's stash dwindling or gone. No spice left to contain you, just the crystal rising in your gorge. *I have almost forgot the taste of fears...*

"Am I disturbing you?" you ask your friend Juju, his tent next to yours beneath the fig tree.

Juju says no, he loves to listen. He knows what you're reading. He remembers from high school, years ago. It's beautiful. The play, your voice. You sound like Africa. That's what they call you here: Africa. You've never told anyone your name. That's for home. Your father's house, to which you will return.

"Don't worry," you tell your father when you call. "You will see me soon."

You read. *Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creeps in this petty pace...*

"Brother," Juju says, "I love you."

T **HE IRONY IS** almost too crude, but there it is: Charly "Africa" Keunang read plays because when he was younger he'd dreamed of becoming an actor, had immigrated to the U.S. to be in the movies. That didn't happen until the day he died. Just past noon on March 1, 2015, three police officers shot him six times, according to the autopsy commissioned by the family. They had him pinned to the sidewalk. Several bystanders took phone videos; one posted his online.

By the time Charly was shot, he was at least the 175th person killed by American law enforcement in 2015. That number has since risen to 470, according to *The Guardian*. This is likely an underestimate—the most comprehensive records depend on press reports: According to killedbypolice.net, 1,100 dead in 2014. The number of people killed by police in Germany and the U.K. combined is, so far this year, one. Many of those killed by American police were shot while committing a violent crime. But of the thirty-six black people killed by police in

Charly was at least the 175th person killed by American law enforcement in 2015. That number has since risen to 470. The number of people killed by police in Germany and the UK combined is, so far this year, one.





The fifty-block Skid Row district in downtown L.A. is officially designated a homeless “containment” zone. Shelters have 1,000 fewer beds than there are homeless residents.

March 2015 alone, seventeen were unarmed, according to mapping-policeviolence.org. Charly was unarmed.

In 2013, three activists, Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tometi, and Alicia Garza, launched the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the killing of unarmed Trayvon Martin. Since then there are the killings of unarmed black men that don't make much news—Jonathan Ferrell in Charlotte, Dontre Hamilton in Milwaukee, John Crawford III, shot without clear warning while shopping for a BB gun at a Walmart in Ohio. And then, the martyrs, a word that means “witness”: Eric Garner, choked; Michael Brown in Ferguson; Tamir Rice, 12 years old.

Added to this very incomplete account, on March 1, there's Charly. Dozens more unarmed black men have been killed by police since Charly's death, most notably Freddie Gray, whose “rough ride” in the back of a Baltimore police van—his spine snapped—we can only imagine. Many can imagine all too easily, memories of years and decades and generations of police violence against black people

simmering, which is why on the day of Freddie Gray's funeral in April Baltimore burned.

But this story is about Charly. One black life that mattered, no more nor less than any other. The video that went viral begins just before noon on that Sunday, sun dappling the sidewalk between the man holding the cell phone and a figure windmilling his arms at a circle of four police officers. That's what the public knows. In security-camera footage from the Union Rescue Mission, in front of which Charly lived and died, the conflict builds more slowly. The police say they were responding to a robbery call. In the fifty-block Skid Row district officially designated a homeless “containment” zone, an open can of beer draws multiple squad cars. Here there is at first only one officer, an unusual response if the situation was, in fact, as threatening as they'd later claim.

Two more policemen arrive. One drifts away and returns. No cuffs. Then, according to witnesses, Charly says, “I don't want to talk to you.” On Skid Row that can count as resisting. An officer



takes out a Taser. Escalation. Another officer arrives. A woman wanders into the scene. Skid Row's like that. "This is our TV," says Dennis Horne, a resident here, who watched from across San Pedro. An officer shoves the woman into the street. "Skinny girl," thinks Horne. "What they pushing on her so hard for?" Most of the police are indistinguishable to the crowd, but one of the officers, Francisco Martinez, has a reputation on Skid Row. "Hard-ass bitch cop," says a witness. His partner is an African-American rookie never identified by the LAPD, whose name, says a source familiar with the case, is Joshua Volasgis.

Charly stoops to enter his tent. One officer fires a Taser; the others tear the tent down. Charly emerges on his knees. "He's saying hold up, wait, wait," according to Eddie Equiarte, who watched from the corner store. But all we have is his memory. At least two officers are reportedly wearing body cameras, but the LAPD has to date refused to release that video. What to make of this? On the one hand, police have been quick in the past to release video that exonerates their own. On the other—we don't know what's in the other hand. The LAPD isn't showing.

This—where the viral video picks up—is the beginning of the end: "He came out like a whirlwind," says Mecca Harper, who owns a store by Charly's corner. In the clearest of the videos, he weaves between two cops and turns and swings and misses, the punch carrying

him full circle, then he twirls again, arms akimbo, and loses whatever balance he has. An officer catches him. Volasgis, who has dropped his nightstick—he lets go as if he's forgotten it's in his hand—grabs him. All four officers swarm. "My nigger! My nigger!" shouts a man watching.

The skinny girl—her name is Trishawn Carey, but on the street people call her Nicki Minaj—walks around the knot of men and picks up the stick. What she means to do with it isn't clear. It was not likely clear to her. She's "fifty-one fifty," say many who know her, slang for insane. Later, when I visit her in jail—her bail is set at \$1,085,000, and she could face life without parole for picking up the stick with which she didn't touch a soul—she'll tell me she doesn't remember what happened, she doesn't really know why she's in jail. Then, crying without tears, she'll sing hymns. Pretty little soprano through the jailhouse phone.

"She's got my stick!" yells one of the cops. We see Charly on his back, Volasgis hunched

• **OPPOSITE:** When Charly moved to the street, he told shopkeeper Mecca Harper (pictured) that he'd been in a mental institution. "Hey, baby," she said, "that's your story." Nobody has to bring a past to Skid Row if they don't want to, so Charly left his behind.

• **ABOVE:** Laru Jay Cruis called the police on Charly the day he died. Like Charly, he was trying to return home.



PORTRAITS OF SKID ROW

• The work of South African photographer Pieter Hugo bridges the worlds of fine art (he's in the Met's permanent collection) and photojournalism (his most famous series is of Nigerian gang members and their pet hyenas). For the photographs in this story, he spent

ten days on the streets of Skid Row, shooting hundreds of images. "More than just acknowledging the homeless, these photos are about acknowledging our problematic dynamic with them," Hugo says. "I want them to look back at you. I want you to be confronted by these portraits."

over his head. “I’m able to effectively land blows upon his face,” he’ll later say, according to a source familiar with the inquiry. Another cop appears to have his hands on Charly’s torso, a third grips his left leg, a fourth his right.

There is the beetle-like *zkk-zkk-zkk* of a Taser.

The police will say it didn’t connect. True? We’ll have to trust them. Some Tasers record voltage, but the police won’t release any data.

So what we have is this: a glint of sun on a squad car, reflected light dissecting the scene, and Volasgis, shouting—we can’t be sure. Some hear, “Drop the gun!” Others, “He’s got my gun!” Charly didn’t have the gun, of that there’s no question. He may have reached for it. His arm may have spasmed. He may have never come near. Freeze the video and you see a hand in silhouette. According to a source familiar with the investigation, Martinez will say yes, he saw a hand, but he’s not sure if it was the suspect’s, dark, or his partner’s, light. He will say Volasgis screamed. He will say he is the first shooter, one shot. Then a pause. Then Sergeant Chand Syed and Officer Daniel Torres open fire.

Volasgis stumbles backward. He never gets the gun police will say Charly was reaching for out of his holster.

Some people hear three shots, most make out five. The autopsy commissioned by Charly’s family—three months later, the coroner still hasn’t released theirs—says the police shot Charly six times.

“Boom-boo-boom, boom-boo-boom,” says Hadiya Najeri Palmer, who watched from her wheelchair.

“Goddamn!” hollers the man holding the cell phone. “Motherfucker. Motherfucker. Motherfu-u-u-cker.”

Charly likely died instantly. He was declared dead at 12:07 P.M. After the police took his body, there was no blood on the sidewalk, no sign of him at all.

TEN MONTHS BEFORE he died Charly started a Twitter account, under the handle @bothleservant, writing in English and French, his native tongue. He called himself *Both* because that’s what it felt like to be Charly: human and divine, the good and the bad. *Le Servant*, because he hoped the sins of his past would help him be humble. “En realite ‘ton enemy jure’ c’est tout ce que tu as,” he tweeted on May 21, 2014. “In reality, ‘thy sworn enemy,’ that’s all you have.”

POLICE ON SKID ROW aren’t like other police; or, maybe they *are* like other police, only more so. They’re a specially designated fifty-officer detachment called the Safer Cities Initiative Task Force, one cop per square block of the Skid Row containment zone—not so much policing as an occupation, headquartered in Central Division’s mostly windowless cement bunker, the front of which features a tile mural of American policing that begins with a white cowboy, proceeds through a white cop helping a white woman and her daughter cross the street, and concludes with what appears to be an entirely white class of modern police cadets.

Police follow a “zero tolerance” “Homeless Reduction Strategy”; to the downtown developers association it’s part of an “urban renaissance,” a scrubbing of downtown L.A. to make it safe for lofts and bistros. At one point the Safer Cities Initiative considered narrowing the sidewalks to make them more difficult to sleep on, but it’s proven easier to push the “threat,” as the developers call homeless people,

into the containment zone. Increasingly, it’s divided vertically, street people below, “loft people” above. A block from Charly’s corner, in a converted industrial space called Little Tokyo Lofts—part of Skid Row’s rebranding—a half-million dollars can buy you fifteen-foot ceilings, a working fireplace, and a private dog run, insulated from the street by what the building lists as its top amenity: twenty-four-hour security with video surveillance, one of the many little private police forces of downtown L.A.

Containment is really recycling: A concentration of services such as shelters and food kitchens (not nearly enough; approximately 1,000 fewer beds than there are homeless) combined with “broken windows” policing results in a relentless jail-prison-street churn, as police pursue petty users, crack down on open containers, and wage war on jaywalkers. In the first year of Safer Cities, police issued some 12,000 citations, around 80 percent of which were for “pedestrian violations,” according to a 2007 UCLA study. How do poor people pay all these tickets? They don’t. That’s the point. An unresolved ticket becomes an arrest warrant. The result is the criminalization of Skid Row, which then justifies the deployment of more force, since a large percentage of the population is, technically, “wanted.”

The stories the LAPD tell about why they had to shoot Charly—there are two, the official one delivered by Chief Charlie Beck, and the one leaked to the press—are contradictory and yet ultimately the same. Beck said Charly reached for the gun. Law-enforcement sources told the L.A. *Times* that the body-cam footage, still unreleased, does not show Charly doing so. Police haven’t released the 911 call said to have initiated the encounter, but Beck urged us to imagine what was said. “Sometimes,” said Beck, “[it gets] lost in here that there was a victim.” He meant Charly’s neighbor, Laru Jay Cruls. The “victim,” continued Beck, “had to be treated by an ambulance.” He didn’t mention that Crul says his treatment consisted of an ice pack he didn’t use. When I meet Laru he’ll tell me that, yes, he did call 911, after a scuffle with Charly. But when police arrived, according to a source familiar with the investigation, he did not say—before or after the killing, when the police pressed him—that Africa had assaulted him. That night he camped

on the site of the killing. TV reporters did their stand-ups with his tent in the background. Nobody asked him questions.

Meanwhile, the L.A. *Times* reproduced accounts of the body cams the police would not actually show them, citing unnamed sources. These sources spoke not of the shooting but of Charly’s hopeless punches. That Charly fought back wasn’t in dispute. The question was whether police had been justified in killing an unarmed man.

Sources familiar with the investigation had an answer: Charly was an ex-con, a bank robber. And he was wanted for not reporting to his probation officer. Both things are true and neither is an answer. Their point was to change the question. Not “Was the killing justified?” or looming even larger, “Do the LAPD have a race problem?”

Last July, half a block from where Charly was shot, police responded to an unarmed mentally ill homeless man named Carlos Ocana sitting on top of a billboard. He was known on the street for climbing. Harmless. Police Tasered him; he fell and died.

In August, a mentally ill homeless black man named Ezell Ford was killed by police in circumstances almost identical to Charly’s.

In May of this year, it was Brendon Glenn, under circumstances, again, almost identical to Charly’s. (continued on next page)



↑
Charly came to America because he wanted to become an actor. He wanted to be the Robert De Niro of Cameroon.



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Maybe “race problem” isn’t adequate. Maybe the right question is: Do the LAPD—do American police—have a killing problem?

Instead, the question asked by Chief Beck and by much of the media was smaller. Meaner. “What did *this* man do to deserve to die?”

“Both, is that you?”—Charly’s first tweet, May 18, 2014

CHARLY LEUNDEU KEUNANG was born in Douala, the largest city in Cameroon, to Heleine Tchayou and Isaac Keunang on September 6, 1971. Isaac was an auto mechanic, a good middle-class job, and the Keunangs lived in a house with a yard big enough to host the neighborhood soccer games, over which Heleine would preside from inside the home. His sister, Line, three years older, was her deputy. In a family photograph Isaac wears a suit and tie, Heleine a collared, western dress. They’re a handsome couple, plump-faced; in America you might think them midwestern. Charly, 3 or 4, has his father’s lips and cheekbones, his mother’s eyes. But he’s his father’s son. You see it in the way Isaac holds the boy, the way Charly leans back into his father’s big arms.

“It was just kind of easy for him to have friends,” says Line. They were silly close, peapod close, almost always pictured holding hands. “Sis,” he would say, urging her to play with him, “c’mon, you need to be active.” She preferred to watch his games. He loved movies, too. They didn’t get to see many, so Charly wrote his own screenplays. Once he built a makeshift film projector and sold it to a friend. The boy’s father went to Isaac Keunang to complain: The only movies the projector showed were those of the viewer’s own imagination. Isaac told the man that he should wish for his son to be blessed with such notions.

Two years into Charly’s studies at the University of Douala—he majored in math and physics—Isaac lost his job. Charly would have to find work, and that would mean going abroad. Cameroonians prize education, but their economy doesn’t come close to matching their degrees. To be educated in Cameroon means to be ready to leave Cameroon. “If you don’t get out of the country,” says David Singui, a Cameroonian businessman in L.A. who has become an adviser to the family, “there are names for you: selfish, lazy. You can’t stay in Cameroon with a bright mind.”

Sometime in the late ’90s, Charly moved to France. He always called home. “Even when he travel he find a way to touch his family,” says Line. After two years, during which he found a job that involved driving luxury cars

from Germany to France—he would later tell anyone who would listen of racing Porsches along the Autobahn—he decided to go to America, part of a wave of educated Africans. They came to open businesses, to earn MBAs, to become CPAs. Charly had something else in mind. A school he had learned about, he told Line. The Beverly Hills Playhouse. The very best. *Playhouse?* said Line. What kind of school was that? *For acting*, said Charly.

It’s a measure of Line’s love that she accepted this ambition. She didn’t ask questions. If she had, Charly might have told her about the movies in his mind, ones in which he slipped easily into the roles of his favorite actor: Charly as Vito Corleone, Charly as Jake LaMotta—Charly Keunang, the De Niro of Cameroon.

“Regarding existence, only the liar will live the truth. Lie to yourself if you must lie.”—May 21, 2014

AFTER THE POLICE killed Charly, the press would report that he came to the U.S. on a stolen French passport. It’s more likely that he bought it, a common means of entry for African immigrants in the 1990s. For most, it was just a way to get in. Charly thought it was how things were done. Like the movies. Roy Scherer became Rock Hudson, Issur Demsky became Kirk Douglas, Archie Leach became Cary Grant. Charly Keunang became Charly Robinet, and, in 1999, arrived at last in Hollywood, U.S.A., to begin his career.

That didn’t exactly happen. Cameroonians usually found each other quickly, but Charly was alone. He lived in a dingy apartment. He was carless in L.A. He was undocumented. The only work he could find was under the table. Later he’d say he’d been a French tutor. At the time, he told friends he was a personal trainer. He was beautiful—innate style, a liquid line of smooth muscle, an easy grin and giant eyes—and he had several girlfriends, who helped him pay the rent. It was not enough. He had crossed the ocean, but he could not afford his acting lessons.

There’s a car chase. Spikes in the road. They ditch the car; run. Charly goes down on the beach. There’s \$33,500 stuffed in his underwear. He thanks a deputy for not shooting him.

Which is how on February 22, 2000, Charly came to be riding shotgun in a little Dodge Neon with a friend named Raja, who’d come to him with a plan as good as a movie—a bank robbery, based on a movie, in fact, *Heat*, a 1995 thriller starring De Niro and Al Pacino. Squeezed into the backseat, there was a giant, baby-faced man called Big Herc, who was the only working artist among the three—he was a porn star, known for his work in films such as *Budonkadunk #8* and *Shave Dat Nappy Thang #13*. Herc loved the porn game, but he wanted to be high-class like Charly, dapper, a thinking man.

But now, listening to Charly and Raja bicker in the front seat, the eve of the heist, scouting out a Wells Fargo, he was beginning to have doubts. Charly was always telling Herc how much he loved De Niro, but at the moment Charly sounded more like *Reservoir Dogs*. One of those whiny white bitches with the skinny black ties, always talking, blah, blah, “Like a Virgin,” blah, blah.

With Charly it was chocolate he wouldn’t shut up about.

“Need it before I can rob a bank,” he says.

Raja: “You don’t need no fucking chocolate.”

“I gotta have my chocolate, man, or else I can’t.”

The plan had been simple. In, out, nobody hurt, bank’s insured. “Victimless crime,” they agreed. How else were three black men with no credit going to get a loan? Raja wanted to start a production company. Herc wanted a record label. And Charly, of course, was an actor. They’d launch their careers, and never speak of it again. But now? Charly’s afraid, Herc can tell.

“Pull over,” Charly says.

“Excuse me?” says Raja. “Not a whole lotta black people here.” Three black men in Calabasas, and next day there’s a bank robbery? There’s your fucking Hershey.

Not Hershey; Godiva.

Raja caved; they stopped at a gas station.

This dude, Herc thinks, *is not ready*.

February 23, 2000. When they get into the bank, Charly vaults over the counter, shouting in a fake accent that’s supposed to sound Middle Eastern. “Open the fucking vault or I’ll kill you!” But the teller can’t open the vault. Charly doesn’t understand. Or maybe he does, and he’s just acting? That’s what Herc thinks when Charly brings his pistol down on the teller’s skull. *That’s something they do in the movies*, he thinks.

An assistant manager opens a safety-deposit box, Charly stuffs \$94,000 into a bag, they’re off. But they’ve taken too long. There’s a car chase. Thirty miles, their red Navigator alone on the 101, a galaxy of red and blue sirens filling the lanes behind. Spikes in the road. They ditch the car; run. Charly takes off for the beach; he’s caught. There’s \$33,500 stuffed in his underwear. He thanks a deputy for not shooting him. Later, police find two bills they’d overlooked, stuck to his ass. A \$10 and a \$50.

When the FBI arrives, Charly tells the agent he doesn’t want to hurt his friends, but he’ll talk. “I have spoiled my life,” he says. There is nothing left to lose. “I will tell you everything about me.” He tells the agent about France, about university, about coming to America. He tells him about acting lessons. He didn’t want to be a criminal, he says. He wanted to be an artist. He’d believed that the bank job—like the fake passport—was the way in. He’d believed it would come naturally. Not the crime; the act. The fact. “To rob a bank,” he says, “is just like any acting.”

But there’s a moment inside, Charly tells the FBI, where he’s scanning the lobby and he’s got hold of the teller and the gun’s in his hand, and he spots, down on the floor, a mother and a baby. “And I remember it was—”

He can’t explain, but years later, when he sees Line for the last time, perhaps it is this moment—the mother, the baby, the gun, the blood, the money—that he’ll recall when he tells her he’s sorry; he failed at America.

BIG HERC—TODAY Marcus Timmons, married, a successful businessman—hadn't thought about Charly in years. Then he saw his mug shot on the television. "Homeless Man Killed by LAPD on Skid Row Was Convicted Bank Robber" was the line on KTLA. As if that's all he'd ever been. Herc pleaded out and served eight years, eight months. Charly went to trial. He thought that as an actor, he could finesse the jury. He got fifteen years. He was successful in only one regard. He kept his incarceration secret from his family. He disappeared. This was his consolation. Later, he would tell a friend he tried to kill himself three times. The third time, he'd say, by starvation. He failed at suicide. In 2003, the prison tried to move him to the mental-health unit.

Charly refused. In 2005, the prison sought a court order; a "mental disease or defect," read the petition. On Skid Row, he'd tell those he'd trusted that he'd spent close to ten years in an insane asylum.

"What a heart we are. A decaying yet evanescent heart we are."—June 8, 2014

"JUNE 10," SAYS LINE. She says it often. June 10, 2014: the day Charly returned. "Tuesday," she says. She remembers.

On this Tuesday, hot and rain-slick in the broken blacktop Boston exurb of Malden, Line and her husband, Charles, are going to a

friend's to make arrangements for a memorial. In Cameroon, they wake the dead through the night, until dawn begins to melt the grief away. In America, they play soccer together and plan memorials. Soccer and the dead are what bind them.

Line and her husband Charles are bound: to each other, to their families, to the constellation of Cameroonians scattered across a country without customs, a nation in which immigrants lose their names—Boston and L.A. and New York and Houston. Tonight they'll make plans to come together for Line and Charles: It is Charles's sister who has died.

As they're about to leave, there's a message on Line's phone. A Facebook friend request. Line doesn't have a lot of Facebook friends. She has Charles, she has Jaycee, their 2-year-old daughter, she has a job as a nurse's aide, and she has her ailing mother, living with her in a spare, tidy apartment behind a run-down strip mall. Once, she had Charly, too. She came to America to look for him. But that was eight years ago, and he disappeared six years before that, and she knows she should accept that he is gone, without even a body to wake through to the dawn.

She looks at her phone.

Facebook: "Charly Keunang wants to be your friend."

Line Marquise Foming isn't fragile. She is a steady woman. Cheekbones like the beams of a house, a deep voice of long vowels. Her gaze is direct; she blinks slowly. But then sometimes a key turns, and the past tumbles out, and her hand flies up. Her voice shivers to a halt. She looks away. She shields her tears.

Line stares at the message.

"Who," Line taps, "are you?"

Je suis ton frère. I am your brother.

And then he is there, the rich, deep sound of her baby brother on the phone, now a man. "Sis," he says.

It is a joke, she thinks. Why would someone do this to her?

"My father's name?" she asks.

"Isaac," he says.

"My mother's?"

"Heleine." Then the ghost in the phone names their grandmother and their uncle and their cousins, names and middle names, roots and branches and leaves.

"Oh, my God," says Line. *Mon frère.* Returned. Across an ocean, across fourteen years. This time, she thinks, she will hold on, like the picture she keeps in her phone: He's 4, she's 7, her long skinny arm popping out of her pinafore, reaching down to wrap up his little fingers, everything about him so small except his eyes. His eyes will always be big open windows. She's 7, he's 4, and her eyes are sleepy-proud: *Look what I have, look at my brother in his little white suit.* His eyes so wide. He believes in his big sister. Hold his hand, hold it tight, never let go.

THE DAY LINE called Charly, he wrote what would be his last tweet: "When driven by something bigger than himself, Man is not beatable." Line never did let go. Charly didn't, either. Maybe he stopped tweeting into the void—he had seven followers—because now he was talking to Line. Line sent him money for a bus ticket and eight days later he arrived in Malden. Line was waiting for him at the bus

• For a brief moment, Charly's death became a part of the national #BlackLivesMatter conversation, inspiring protests on Skid Row like the ones below in the week that followed the shooting. *Bottom*, the fig tree where Charly lived and died.



station. She had to be sure. Sure that it was really Charly who'd come back. That all of him was still there. And then he got off the bus; her brother, the part of her that had been missing. "The happiest day of my life," she whispers now, whispers it twice.

He returned to Los Angeles after a short while. He texted or spoke with her nearly every day left in the 263 days allotted to him, right up to the end, the last night, and then he put his phone down, and he took up the play.

The temptation of tragedy is the illusion of inevitability, the retrospective consolation that it could not have been otherwise.

But it was, for a time, otherwise.

Their conversations were sweetly formal, filled with endearments, *mon coeur*, my heart. My sister, he called her. My brother.

They spoke of family, of their mother, of their father, of going home. "Sis," he told Line, "if they ask me to choose between food and going back home—I choose to go back home." They did not speak of the robbery. She knew where he'd been but they did not need to speak of prison. They did not speak of the halfway home to which he was sent after prison or Griffith Park, to which he moved for a time, where beneath eucalyptus trees and tall red cedars he spread all he had—a blanket, some clothes, and a Bible. He would not tell her he was alone, because he wasn't, so long as he had his big sister.

Shortly after moving to Skid Row, Charly stopped going to immigration. Nobody knew his name. They began calling him Africa. By then, he was flickering; present and gone.

And he had a new friend, Jose. Jose had been visiting a friend in the halfway home, and then he and Charly became friends, too. Jose saw Charly needed shelter, so he offered him a room. Beyond the city, Jurupa Valley. Charly lived in a room above the garage and worked for his keep; he fed chickens and goats and horses. Together, they went to the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, listened to its choir, discussed the wonders of its construction, sharp lines that feel soft and soaring, air filled with gentle light, space that holds you like a mother's arms. He ate meals with Jose's elderly parents, immigrants themselves. "Papa," he said, thanking the old man. "Mama."

One day he called his father. Isaac said, "Come home," and Charly wept, because he could not. He had no money, no nation. He wasn't an American or a Frenchman. His own country did not recognize the ex-felon with no proof of who he was. Keunang, Robinet? *Both*.

It was time to go back to Cameroon. He tried. If he reported himself, they'd have to deport him, wouldn't they? Jose drove him an hour to an immigration office in the city. The first time, the two men said good-bye. Forty-five minutes later, Charly called Jose: They would not deport him. Not that day. Paperwork. His was missing.

Jose brought him to immigration again. They hugged. *This time*, Charly believed.

Inside, he said, *Deport me*. Send me home. I am not an American. This time security escorted him out.

Jose drove him into the city for a third time, and then a fourth.

He had failed at failure; he could not even be cast out.

When did he first try spice? When did he first smoke crystal?

By fall, Jose decided Charly couldn't remain. He had volunteered at a mission in the city, and that's where he brought Charly. Charly moved into the mission and then he moved out, and one day, in October or November, nobody is sure, he came with a tent to the two-story cross on San Pedro.

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AT FIRST CHARLY told himself he'd moved to Skid Row to be closer to the immigration office. But after a while he stopped going. He stopped meeting with his probation officer, too. Nobody knew his name. They began to call him Africa. He did not correct them. By then, he was flickering; present and gone.

He could still summon himself. When there was noise in Mecca Harper's shop, he would peek in with his hands together, "as if praying," and he would bow. "He had manners," she says, her highest praise. On his good days he liked to talk, and sitting on his milk crate he drew around himself a small circle of crystal philosophers, men to whom the drug seemed to return—as long as a \$10 hit lasted—the power to make sense of the tragedy and comedy that had funneled them down at last to this dusty corner. "Politics. God. History," says his friend James Attaway, who liked the way Africa gave him a break from "Skid Row things," the constant rattle of the insane and the addicted. "He was a good *comrade*," says Juju. And then there was the third man: Laru, who would call the police on Charly that Sunday. Because, he'd tell me, there was, hidden in his Bible, a bus ticket home to Minnesota and to his 10-month-old daughter; and because that morning when Laru and Africa scuffled—Laru was hassling a girl, and Africa didn't like that—Laru's Bible fell open, and his ticket fluttered away. Gone. That's why he called the police. Africa would understand. He, too, had lost his ticket.

To Line, who sent him money, Charly never spoke a word of Laru or James or Juju, not of his tent or his crate or even the cross under which he'd come to live. She knew nothing of Skid Row. He was holding on, he promised, he would never leave her again, he swore. But all the miles between them, L.A. to Boston, all the America in between, it was growing stronger. So he would take himself away from the noise of the street to call her. He would hide in his tent and call.

"What did Charly pray for?" I ask Juju when he comes to me late one night. Juju seems surprised by the question. "A man's prayers," he says, "is between him and God."

"When we talked," Line says, "we always talked about God." Charly would tell her, "Maybe we can say, 'God will protect you.'" Charly wanted Line to be protected. From what was, from what might be coming.

Charly always had been. Line was more cautious. A churchwoman, yes; but belief? Her baby brother's first disappearance had taught her. "Sometimes I say he's alive," she'd think during his missing years. "Sometimes I say he's not." She learned. "You can say he's alive when you do not see the body. You still believe." His reappearance strengthened her faith further.

Bonne nuit, mon coeur, he wrote her that Saturday night.

And then came that Sunday morning. Maybe it was always coming. Maybe it's coming now.

It is.

Get ready. Hold on.

Open your eyes. Sunday. You must remember to call Line. You must remember God. *Both*. In the darkness, before you smell the piss at the foot of the cross, the dew on the fig leaves, the spice you don't have, you say the prayers with which you begin each morning. And when your prayers are complete, you are ready. You zip your tent open, and that Sunday begins.

"What did he pray for?" I ask Juju when he comes to me late one night at Miss Mecca's, sweating and sober so he can tell me about his friend.

Juju seems surprised by the question.

"A man's prayers," he says, "is between him and God."

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IN MALDEN, MASSACHUSETTS, Charly's mother, Heleine, is watching the evening news. "Line," she calls to her daughter, "you see what I'm seeing here?"

"Yes," answers Line, looking at that awful video—some poor homeless black man, shot like a dog—on their big-screen TV. "I already saw it," says Line. It's Monday now; the killing has already been news for twenty-four hours. She's worried about Charly. He didn't call on Sunday, like he'd promised. Charly always called. She'd tried him in the afternoon. No answer. In the evening, that awful news. Poor man. Homeless. Thank God for Jose, who gives Charly a home.

Tuesday she tries again. "*Bonjour*, brother!" she texts. No answer. She keeps coming back to the story of this man called Africa. They say he has family overseas. This worries her.

The call comes at 2:30 A.M. Her cousin Dorice calling from Cameroon. "What happened?" Line demands, as if she knows already. She won't let Dorice answer. "Why you call me at this time?" Dorice starts to speak. "Two thirty in the morning!" says Line. "Why do you call me at—"

"*Vois-tu Charly?*" Do you see Charly?

"I say, 'What?'" Line tells me one afternoon in her Malden home. Her recitation until now has been monotone, her gaze fixed over my shoulder. A sturdy woman, Line Marquise Foming, until the key turns. And now the key has turned, and it will never turn back. The killed man, Dorice says. There's a mug shot. Charly.

Now it is a month later. April 4, 2015. The long Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. In the Christian time in which Line lives it is the day after the killing, the day

the dead don't rise. Her brother came back from the dead once, but there will be no more resurrections. She keels forward. Her voice goes hollow and high like I've not heard it in hours of talking, not even through other bouts of tears. "I put my hand on my head!" And she does, now. "She's sick!" she says. She's talking about her mother, who's now sobbing. And then Heleine, a regal woman in a magnificent Cameroonian yellow dress, reaches over and grips her daughter's knee.

Line's daughter, Jaycee, goes to her mother's side and holds her. It's not the hug of a child. It's the embrace of one who consoles. Jaycee is 3. Line accepts what Jaycee gives her, and then she nudges her toward Heleine. Jaycee walks slowly into her grandmother's great yellow dress, her pink shirt disappearing. Heleine enfolds her. It's as if Heleine is taking her children back, Line and Line's daughter and Charly and the children Charly will never have, two generations of grief returning to the womb. Back over the ocean, back to the house in Douala, back before he was born, before he could be killed. She takes the gift her granddaughter gives her. The little girl presses her head against her African grandmother's belly. She is 3. This killing is her inheritance. Her American story.

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CHARLY'S BODY REMAINED, refrigerated, at the Angelus Funeral Home on Crenshaw Boulevard for nearly three months. The family wanted to ship the body to Cameroon, but it is expensive. A family friend made a GoFundMe page but in two months they raised only \$1,346. So the body waited. It is 190 pounds, seventy-one inches long. "Well-built, muscular, and fairly well-nourished," reads the autopsy report. Three ribs are cracked, at least two of them by "Gunshot wound #1." This is the second autopsy, and much has already been done. "Sections of skin are absent," says the examiner of wounds number two and three. "The entrance wounds have been removed." Number three would have passed through the heart. Number four is lodged in the liver. The coroner's study of number five, which hit the left arm, required "extensive dissection." Number six—though they may not have struck in this order—beveled Charly's left wrist.

Maybe number three was the first: through the heart and he was gone. Maybe it was number six, and he held up his arm.

Maybe this matters. Maybe one day we'll know for certain.

What we do know is that Charly Keunang died, shot six times by police in America.

That is a fact.

And then came another, a better truth, or maybe just the least cruel truth the facts of the dead will allow: Charly went home. The family could not raise the money, but a donor came forth, and Line and Heleine flew across the ocean with Charly in a coffin. On May 24, 2015, Line and Heleine and Isaac, the father to whom Charly had promised he would return, laid Charly Leunde Keunang in his own ground, from which he will never be moved, and they waked him through to the dawn. 🌻

JEFF SHARLET, an associate professor of creative writing at Dartmouth College, won the National Magazine Award for Reporting for "Inside the Iron Closet," in the February 2014 issue.

MAKE IT REIGN



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South. I didn't know you could get naked like that."

They can, indeed, get nakeder down here than they can in many places. Strippers can be fully nude in Atlanta. And in places like Magic City, you're encouraged to be creative with your nudity. Lil Magic says, "They don't just get naked here, they get asshole-naked. You could tell me to get naked standing in this room and I might do it. Then you'd tell me to bend over? Nope." Big Magic took notes. He ran some calculations about alcohol revenues and door take. And he saw an opportunity. "Like I said, the girls were rough in there. But I wondered: What if you had some pretty girls in the club? What the hell could happen then?"

He opened Magic City in 1985 with a single dancer. But a single dancer with, as he says it, a *perfect balloon butt*. Then he hired a woman named Indigo. "She brought one of the first big butts in Atlanta," he says. "Just a big round perfect butt. You could bounce a quarter off of it." But no one had yet thought up the kind of butts that you find in the strip clubs of Atlanta now, the anatomically impossible, fantastical, warped, unlicensed-plastic-surgeon-designed asses that have blown the minds of people like Yung Stunt for many years. "They weren't as big as today," Big Mag says. "This thickness wasn't the thing back then."

Alas, butts are just one ingredient that made Magic City into what it is today. Big Mag, and Magic City, also came of age at a propitious time in Atlanta, when Atlanta was just starting to become Black Hollywood.

"It was right when Deion [Sanders] and Dominique [Wilkins] came to Atlanta, that's when it all started," Big Mag says. "It was '89, '90. Michael Irvin—we were all party animals; I started to know all the wild guys. Then they all started coming in here. And Deion brought me [MC] Hammer when he was hot. And now we were starting to get a whole lot of little guys like that, and they were starting to make their moves. I knew L. A. Reid back when he was married to Pebbles. TLC. Bobby Brown. Whitney. And of course Jermaine Dupri. He should be where Puffy at, but he didn't have that close-out finesse that Puffy had. And Magic City was the first club in Atlanta that made them feel comfortable. Michael Jordan wasn't hanging out in strip clubs until Magic City."

But it wasn't Jermaine Dupri or MC Hammer or Michael Jordan who made Magic City into what it is now. It was BMF. You've heard of BMF, right? Yes? No? Well, BMF is the greatest subject of street lore in the history of Atlanta. There are songs, books, documentaries, three-part journalistic investigations of BMF. In the early 2000s, BMF, which stands for Black Mafia Family, was a drug

organization. It was, according to the DEA, one of the most notorious drug-trafficking organizations in America, with profits of \$270 million over the course of its short life. A man named Big Meech was its mastermind and overlord. And Big Meech did not have a discreet management style. I'm pretty sure BMF is the only major drug-trafficking enterprise ever to rent a giant billboard on a major interstate to advertise itself; if you'd driven into Atlanta in 2004, you would have seen a sign that read **THE WORLD IS BMF'S**. Big Meech also fancied himself a music mogul and, at the height of its largesse, made BMF into a record label; he was known for his relationship with the rappers Young Jeezy, T.I., and a certain Bleu DaVinci, whom you can still find hanging around Atlanta.

What BMF really was—more than a drug-trafficking concern or a hip-hop label—was the biggest socio-cultural thing to happen to Atlanta since, probably, *Gone with the Wind*. What BMF really was, was a rap song come to life. You know the world that's depicted in rap videos? The rapper at the wheel of a \$300,000 car getting dry-humped by fourteen strippers driven into a kind of involuntary ecstasy simply by his presence? Watching reams of American currency being lit on fire or blown away into the streets while he just smokes a cigar and barely notices because he's somehow achieved a new consciousness of wealth in which there is no dollar figure large enough the loss of which would be of any emotional consequence? That was how BMF lived for real, and they liked to live that way in public, and the principal way to interface with that public was through the strip club.

Everyone speaks of that era kind of wistfully, especially strippers, who are still happy to make \$5,000 in a night but know there was a time when **that number was more like \$20,000.**

It was at Magic City where, in the early 2000s, you could experience most fully the world of BMF. At the apogee of their wealth and power, BMF would show up, order \$100,000, throw it on the floor, and leave in forty-five minutes. This was the epoch, and the city, in which the concept of making it rain was born. Up until then, people were just putting money in garter belts. But that was not a sufficient expression of how little money meant to BMF. They had to throw it, fertilize the air with it like pollen. "BMF shut the club down," the radio host J-Nicks said to me. "It was strippers driving Bentleys and owning seven-bedroom houses." Just about everyone speaks of that era kind of wistfully, especially strippers, who are still happy to make \$5,000 in a night but know there was a time when that number was more like \$20,000.

"They was a little brutal back in the BMF," the dancer Aimee told me. "They would have joy slapping the girls in the face with the money. You get sucker punched in the face with a thousand dollars, but you laugh it off because it's so much money."

Big Meech and most of the rest of BMF went to jail seven years ago. But Big Mag still sees his business as one that operates in a world where people like BMF are your clients. It took a long negotiation to get Big Mag to sit down to be interviewed. It is not something he'd ever done before. Big Mag still sees himself as a denizen of what no small number of people described to me as a secret society. Magic City operates as a part of its own economy; as Lil Magic says, "The way some of these people throw money, you know it probably didn't come in check form." And Big Mag, not to mention the strippers and the hustlers, not to mention the doctors and the lawyers and the members of the Atlanta Falcons, all see Magic City belonging to a shadow side of the city.

Part Three: Aimee the Dancer

ON THE STAGE at any one time you're going to have two to five dancers performing what they call a stage set. Take this moment on a Monday night: There's one woman hanging upside down from a crossbar that descends from the ceiling, and she's got her forearms locked with those of another dancer, who pulls herself up from the floor and kind of flips over so that the one on top can pantomime that she's performing oral pleasures on her partner. But what this is really about is the dismount, in which the bottom one lets go all at once and drops to the floor in a split. Meanwhile a woman with long Robitussin-red hair on another corner of the stage gets on all fours, her knees spread slightly wider than her hips. She pivots her butt into the air and then does a quick contraction of the pelvic floor, then just as quickly releases the butt backward and into a kind of rhythmic motion that seems almost self-perpetuating. It's like fly-fishing, but with a butt.

This is something called twerking. Which you know if you have an Internet connection. People think they know all about twerking. But if these people are like me, they are wrong. The twerking at places like Magic City, that is the only real twerking. Those other twerks, the Miley Cyrus twerks, even the twerks in regular clothes-on nightclubs, are meta-twerks. They are twerks in air quotes. I am not casting aspersions or making cultural judgments here. You guys are great, really, and I'm sure those twerks *feel* real when you're doing them. But it is not possible to glean the true meaning of the twerk except in the strip clubs of Atlanta. Twerks lit with blue neon, scented in Tahitian-vanilla body butter and antiseptic witch hazel.

Now on the stage at Magic City there is standing-up twerking and lying-down twerking and single-butt-cheek-isolation twerking, which calls to mind a kind of winking. But all twerking reverts to a common form: You have a stripper, or several, standing naked. Before the stripper(s), there is the customer, a man, often in a hooded sweatshirt. Usually, if you look around, you'll find the man's friends at a nearby table, checking their phones. And while fly-fishing with her derriere, as the man stands and nihilistically sheds wealth, the dancer is meant to look backward over her own ass at him. There's an overwhelming sense of the ritualistic here, divorced from lust or spontaneity, the way the taking of Communion is merely symbolic of the joy of Communing with God. Anyway, these are the optics, if you're part of

this twerking, and it's an awfully specific kind of wish fulfillment, an awfully specific kind of *movie* you're making.

When they're done, the movie is over. The men sit together again, turning to themselves, while the dancers squat on the floor in their high-heeled ankle boots and, in short, brisk sweeping motions, push all of their money into a pile, stuff it into a plastic deli bag, and bring it downstairs to the house mother, who marks the bag with a pen and logs the amount into a ledger she keeps scrawled on the front page of a yellow legal pad.

I got to wondering what the scenario looks like from the other direction (the view from the other side of the butt, as it were). What kind of movie is that? Aimee, the exotic dancer, said this to me, which helped me understand a lot: "I found out I was *fine* when I was 5 years old." She had agreed to meet me as long as I booked a table at her preferred lunching place, the Ruth's Chris Steak House in Midtown. "Sometimes I *try* not to look cute. But I can't. I'll go to the mall without my hair or face on point and people will *still* stop me."

have to be the best crayon in the box, but you have to have it. And I have it." She took a sip of her margarita. (She only drinks Patrón.) "You can't *help* but see me. I'm captivating."

I asked Aimee what she was after. "I don't expect to stop dancing until I get my million," she told me. "I'm a *hustler*."

For a while, I hadn't been able to understand why Magic City felt like such a hopeful place. Because strip clubs in general are depressing. But it's because of what Aimee was talking about. It's because everyone who comes to Magic City comes to make something of themselves. It is a hall of aspirations. It's because everyone who comes into Magic City has a hustle. The people who want to be rappers have their hustle, the people who already are have theirs, Magic himself has his hustle,



• City Dollars (left) is a manager with big plans for artists like Corey Cash—plans that rely on Magic City.

She had brought her friend, the exotic dancer Viv, with her. "It's true," Viv said. "She is *sought-after*."

Aimee was a cheerleader in high school, and it's not hard to imagine her even at age 29 holding some pom-poms. Today she was wearing a Junior League-appropriate print wrap dress. Her hair and her face were, indeed, on point. Viv wore a hat with a coy little veil on it.

"It's so many beautiful girls, but you can tell who has it," Aimee said. Aimee started out our conversation being nervous and demure, but we somehow opened a seam of pure ego, a force of will. "Beyoncé has it. Solange don't. You don't

and the dope boys have theirs; the DJs and the producers and the managers and hype men, they are all here hustling. Even the dancers came here to be someone. I met women from Detroit; Miami; Columbus, Ohio; Milwaukee. If you thought you were prettier than the town you were in, if you thought you were better, if you just heard about the cash in the clubs here, you came to Atlanta.

"The money and the respect is different than anywhere else," Aimee said. "I'm famous in Atlanta."

I asked what she was after. "I don't expect to stop dancing until I get my million," Aimee said. "I'm a *hustler*."

Aimee has a savings account. She carries a book with her at all times called *Think and Grow Rich*, by Napoleon Hill. She tells me she's entrepreneurial. "I'm not just picking up singles off the floor. You think I'm just picking up singles off the floor when there's real money out there?"

So where does that real money come in?

"I have my sponsors."

Sponsors? "They call it a situationship—I can't really call them boyfriends. I don't *claim* my boyfriends, because they're not *claimable*. They take care of me."

And who are your sponsors?

"A rapper, a professional athlete, another one who says he's a rapper, but he's probably a dope boy. If I feel overworked and underpaid, I'll invoice them!" Aimee said. It was fairly certain to me at this point that Aimee was talking about a fee-for-service situation with a purview greater than just stripping. I did not ask her to itemize what kinds of services she might invoice for. "I try to juggle no more than five. It's like a basketball team. I loved when T-Mobile had their 'favorite five.' That deal was perfect for me!"

Part Four: Lil Mag, DJ Esco, and the Rap-Strip-Industrial Complex

LIL MAGIC WAS BORN into this. He is 33 years old now and was 4 when Big Mag opened this club. He used to have to cover up his eyes when he walked past the dancers' locker room on the way to his dad's office. Magic City is in his blood, and yet at the same time he sees it from a distance of 4,000 miles. The world exhausts him. "I'm sick of being *urban*," he told me. "There's no room to be uncool in this world. There's no room for weakness. You can't be yourself. Everyone must be the same." And yet here he is, managing the club almost every day. The golden handcuffs of strip. Tonight the weight of the ass-naked world seems to sit even heavier on his well-gymed shoulders. His eyes are bleary. He confesses, as he stands near the bar waiting for Magic City Monday to get going, that he was up until five in the morning negotiating affairs of the heart of a type peculiar to the scions of Atlanta strip gods.

"I found out my ex fucked [two legitimately famous people]—at the same time," he said. This was years ago, she was a dancer at another club, and they were technically broken up at the time, anyway. But they'd been thinking about getting back together, and she'd come clean. Lil Magic is keenly intelligent, and he's a deep thinker, and last night's discovery has presented Lil Magic with some existential questions. "Is it better to know someone's transgressions or not?" he wondered out loud. "Everyone has a past, but some of our pasts are more public. I mean, when Kanye looks at Kim Kardashian, does he see Ray J's dick?"

He scratches his head and looks around. "You can't find a wife here," he said. "You can't find a wife in Atlanta at all. You can find a bitch to put on your arm."

DJ Esco was in his booth, playing Future's "Real Sisters" and getting so joyful and absorbed in it you'd think he'd never heard it before, even though he performs the song with Future. Esco. There is not a thing that bothers Esco, as far as I can tell. He floats through life. The man has an ease about him. If he

stepped off a cliff, he would probably land on a friendly bald eagle and never have been too worried, anyway. I can't imagine a situation that wouldn't be better if Esco were there. He was described to me as a rap hippie, and that seems right. A little light-skinned haricot vert of a man in skinny jeans, with his long dreads restrained by an American-flag scarf.

But besides being a low-impact social lubricant to any situation, Esco happens to possess a singular underground power in the American hip-hop industry. He is the gatekeeper to Magic City. If he doesn't play your song, it is like your song doesn't exist. As the producer TM88 said, if you want anything to happen in Atlanta, "you need to fuck with Esco." "Esco has the city on lock," City Dollars told me. "Esco is our A&R guy," one of Future's managers said. "We don't even listen to anything anymore if Esco doesn't like it."

I talked to Esco about the process by which a guy goes from being a nobody who shows up at Magic City with a song on a thumb drive to being, say, Future. Esco said that, first of all, he's not going to just play your song because he likes your shirt or you give him 200 bucks. (Though you should probably give him 200 bucks; this entire world operates on the tipping economy. More than half of Esco's fee for doing Magic City Mondays comes from the tips he gets from the dancers.) Esco won't even play your song just because he likes your song. Magic City, and Atlanta, as anyone will tell you, is about relationships.

"The girls pick what record pops in the streets. They pick what rapper pops in the streets," Esco said. "The girls at Magic City are the streets."

"They'll stand next to you all night," Esco said about all the people who approach him at the club. "Give you a song and stand next to you like you gonna play it *right then*. You don't just walk in here! You gotta work harder than that."

The other thing is, you're going to have to have some money. Once your song gets played, once people start to know who you are, you need to start throwing money at dancers whenever that song comes on. As Esco says, "I'm not going to let you up on that stage if you don't have no money." And you don't need just the \$3,000, \$4,000, \$10,000 to throw at Magic City on Monday. You need to do that again tomorrow night at Blue Flame, and Thursday at Stokers, and Saturday night at Onyx. So you're going to need what I will call a sponsor. (As a producer said to me, "Everyone in Magic City either is a sponsor or has one.") A professional football player, the rapper T.I., a drug dealer. I saw a rapper named SoSay throw \$30,000 in forty-five minutes at Magic like he was a busted ATM; his "sponsor" was some guy who hit the Powerball a few years ago. And the dancers—they're a lot more likely to request your song if they know you're going to throw \$10,000 at them. That's how you get noticed in the room. And that's how the dancers start requesting your song.

"The girls pick what record pops in the streets. They pick what rapper pops in the streets," Esco had said to me earlier. "The girls at Magic City are the streets."

Like a lot of the time, tonight there was a dancer in the booth with him. Wherever Esco is, there is always a dancer on his lap, or sidled up next to him like a house cat, or idly shaking her butt in his face while he's hanging out at the club on a night he has off. This woman had short dyed-blue hair and a long muscular body and looked almost post-human. She took a long drag off a blunt and passed it back to Esco, then, as they say, danced him while he was smoking.

"Turn-Up Twins, let's go!" Esco said into the microphone, calling an act to the stage. "Cal, Raven. Let's go."

Big Mag is always trying to persuade Esco not to date strippers. Of all the friction at a strip club, Mag said, most of it was between strippers. But, like Lil Magic, Esco ends up dating them anyway. "I come home at five in the morning," he said, "from working at a *strip club*! Or I'll be on the road with Future. Who I'm supposed to date, someone who works at Target?"

But what happens when you and a stripper break up? I asked.

"Then they'll tear the club up! My ex literally tore the fucking club up. They kicked her out the club, so then she went outside and she was trying to do shit to my car. Then her homegirl tricked me and led me into a trap! She was like, 'Come out the back'—and my ex was right there! Tried to jump the fence and come after me."

It was time for her show, so the blue-haired sex alien moved past, briefly enveloping me in the tropical intimacy of her olfactory sense bubble before climbing onto the stage.

It seemed like the metabolism at Magic tended to change at nearly the same time every night: a little after midnight. You cannot be in a rush at Magic City. I did not see a single human being at Magic City—except for maybe a barback or waitress—who did anything more than, like, *amble*. You can't be the first dude in a hype spot. But neither, at a place where one must be *seen*, can one miss the part of the night when one has the greatest chance to be *seen*. And that equation seemed to mean that people really started to show up at about twelve thirty. One minute the crowd would be sparse, and then suddenly there was hardly anywhere to stand. It was getting close to that time, and by now a coterie of music-industry dudes had collected back where they do, near the DJ booth. Coach Tek, 2 Chainz's manager, was there. Blak, a radio deejay from Streetz 94.5. Zaytoven, perhaps the most well-known producer in Atlanta. There was a young independent artist named Rambo So Weird who Esco told me "has that sauce," and another artist named Bankroll Fresh whom Coach Tek was excited about; the veteran Atlanta rapper Pastor Troy was here, and the group Sacii Lyfe, whose song "Thug City" was currently on heavy rotation.

"Cool Amerika in the building," Esco shouted. The rap group Cool Amerika were just entering with their people. "Cool Amerika in the fucking *building*."

Cool Amerika—the group from Stone Mountain, Georgia, whose song "Make Sum Shake" seemed right on the precipice of breaking out of Magic City—is two rappers who go

by the names of Bally and, of course, Stunt. Everybody's name is Stunt right now. Cool Amerika was tonight in the midst of being assimilated into the biome of Magic City.

Only in hip-hop could a club like Magic City have the kind of place in the ecosystem that it does. No other segment of the music industry is dominated so fully at its lowest rungs by homegrown artists. No other segment of the music industry is quite so collaborative, cross-pollinating, fucking *social*, with everyone guesting on everyone else's songs and working with seventeen different producers. And all of that is physically manifested within the cinder-block walls of Magic City. No segment of the music industry produces quite the tidal wave of content that hip-hop does, or creates micro-celebrities with as much frequency, or turns those micro-celebrities into real successes. And no other genre of music disposes of those micro-celebrities just as quickly.

Esco puts on "Make Sum Shake." Stunt and Bally get up onstage with wireless mikes. "I'm gon' make sum shake," Stunt says. "Make sum shake." It's a song about making it shake in the streets and hopefully everywhere else, and it's a song about making butts shake in clubs like Magic City (like Future's "Fuck Up Some Commas" is about throwing figures with lots of zeros at strippers).

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If you're Cool Amerika tonight, you're right at that spot. Right now everything has aligned. Esco knows you, and he's behind you. Your "sponsor," who's standing in the literal shadows near the stage as sponsors do, has given you the \$3,000 to throw tonight, and the three you'll throw tomorrow night at Blue Flame, and the thousands you'll throw in the weeks to come. You're Cool Amerika, and people in the club are watching you drop money, and the DJs are saying your name, and the girls are your friends now. You're Stunt and you're 20 years old and you're making a movie. You're almost that thing you've been pretending to be for years and years, borrowing those cars to make your homemade videos, recording your songs in your basement in Stone Mountain, Georgia. You're just one of the hundreds of groups that get lucky enough to get on this stage, one of the thousands of rappers and producers and drop-outs from McClarin Success Academy staying up all night recording songs in their garages, one of a swelling underground that makes the nocturnal zombie metropolis of Atlanta a kind of living moment-to-moment record of the evolution, or devolution, of hip-hop. Tonight Magic City is lifting you up, out of the little neighborhood you came from, offering you up to the world. And you're waiting to see how your movie ends.

DEVIN FRIEDMAN (@devinfriedman) is GQ's director of editorial projects.

DINNER: A TOUGH TICKET



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 48

their dining room," reads one testimonial on Reserve's website, as though it were a system for prison-riot suppression, something to stop diners from peeing on the walls. After a while, you begin to wonder how any restaurant has ever managed to stay open.

With all respect for the very real difficulty of the business, this runs diametrically counter to what it has felt like to actually eat out over the past decade, during which time the balance of power between restaurant and customer has swung dramatically kitchenward in nearly every area, from substitutions to reservations to comfortable seats. To be sure, this has contributed to an era of extraordinary eating. With the license to experiment and a willingly captive, paying audience, chefs have been able to go places, literally and metaphorically, of which they had never before dreamed. At the same time, it has often felt as though the giddiness of the revolution has been used as a onetime excuse to revise every aspect of the dining experience, all but exclusively to the benefit of the house. Worse, we, the dining public, have found ourselves in the odd position of being asked to be happy about it. *Isn't it great to be part of the revolution?* the server seems to be saying, as she lectures us on why the expectation of free bread is outdated.

I recently received an e-mail from the remote Swedish restaurant Fäviken Magasinet, happily announcing that it would now be closed twenty weeks out of the year, the better that its chefs could immerse themselves in meditations on such themes as "The colour blue in nature," "Lupin beans and the use of their proteins," "Monastery life in Finland," and "Traditional and modern methods for extended storage of eggs." This is strange and kind of wonderful, but it's not terribly...hospitable. As in, primarily interested in the care and feeding of guests. At what point, one wonders, does the word *restaurant* cease to apply? Fäviken, incidentally, switched to a prepaid ticket system this spring.

Likewise, it's hard to entirely share Achatz's excitement as he ticks off what can be bought with all the efficiency and savings that selling tickets brings. "Maybe it's, like, working in collaboration with a designer. Maybe \$12,000 of that is me and one of my chefs flying to Tokyo and getting inspired by what's happening there. Maybe hiring another research chef to develop extracts. Maybe we travel to Seattle and we go to Nathan Myhrvold's lab and we see a piece of equipment we've never seen before, and we're able to buy it, because it costs \$22,000. It's really amazing when you start thinking about it."

I get it: The item of faith here is that all these groovy things the artist-chef gets to experience and buy eventually show up on the plate. And I am happy for those chefs. But

agreeing to go out to dinner is different from agreeing to be a patron of the arts. And the fact remains that what Achatz is describing is made possible by a massive shift of the burden of risk from the restaurant to the customer. That's a big change, no matter how excitedly anyone insists that we're all in it together.

ALWAYS, THOUGH, it comes down to that one indefensible diner behavior: the no-show. And the industry's anger is real. "You don't no-show to your accountant. You don't no-show to your doctor. It's only in this weird industry where there's a total lack of ethics and accountability," says Rosoff. "The problem of no-shows is no joke."

But neither is it new. Nor does it appear, in the 200-some-odd-year history of the modern restaurant, to have ended the industry. "Overbooking and a bar to wait in!" said one chef-restaurateur, a ticket doubter, when I asked how he dealt with no-shows. "It's worked for years. It's inefficient and it takes some intuition, but that's part of the equation." Indeed, this was the age-old improv of the maître d'—hoping that the six forty-five left a little early and the eight thirty came late, assuming someone would no-show but budgeting a round of drinks or an extra dessert for the overbooked if not.

"It's just not something that I have ever lost sleep over," says Danny Meyer, whose eight New York restaurants, not to mention wildly successful Shake Shack chain, have made him among the most influential hospitality figures in the world. "If it were that bad, we'd all be out of business right now."

Meyer, it should be noted, was an investor in OpenTable before its 2014 acquisition by Priceline. He concedes that tickets make perfect sense for a narrow band of restaurants like Alinea, but his broader objections are very much in line with the philosophy of "enlightened hospitality" he proselytizes in his book *Setting the Table* and elsewhere. "I'm a huge believer in trying to have a charitable assumption," he says. "At the end of the day, we're trying to provide pleasure for people. We're trying to make people feel good. And if you start by saying, 'By the way, I don't really trust you,' I don't think that sets up the right kind of experience. It just feels like the height of hubris to say that, relative to the 26,000 other options in New York City, you have to pay ahead for this one."

Hugh Acheson, who owns restaurants in Athens, Atlanta, and Savannah, Georgia, also remains untempted. Tickets, he fears, would limit the flexibility of his hospitality—the freedom to add or take a dish off someone's check, to respond to the moment in the dining room.

"Dining is not a fixed experience, and tickets try to make it that way," he says. They won't work, he says, "until you can create a perfect restaurant in which each seat and each experience is exactly the same. And you will also have created the world's most boring restaurant."

WHY, NICK KOKONAS ASKS, should going to dinner be any different from going to a play or to a Bears game? To which the only answer is: For the same reason wearing underwear in public is different from wearing a bathing suit. Because we know it is. More than anything,

debating this issue with Kokonas and like-minded others reminded me of talking baseball with devotees of sabermetrics—that system of taking everything intuitive about the game and subjecting it to ruthless mathematical analysis. There's no harder argument than with people armed with both numbers and the faith that numbers mean everything. And there's no more powerless a debate position than that of the disrupted. After all, romance and nostalgia are the last refuges of a crank and a square.

But maybe my feeling isn't *just* curmudgeonliness. You need to trust me when I say that I am not a diner who gets hung up on being at the "right table"; I try to abide by Sirio Maccioni's maxim that, at least where he came from, in Europe, the quality of the table is made by who is sitting at it, not the other way around. And yet, at an otherwise dazzling meal at Alinea last fall, my girlfriend and I were seated at an awful table—all alone in the hushed silence of what felt like a forgotten spillover room on the way to the bathroom. Each of us had a sliver of a view into the main dining room, where the hum of conversation was warm and inviting. We could each see one-half of another couple as they ate, like figures in separate Dutch portraits. "I want to see other people," my girlfriend said, about midway through the meal. "Literally." I knew what she meant.

Was my mounting anger, my uncharacteristic resentment, all the ridiculous energy I spent worrying about our seats—until the room finally filled and the wine and pleasures of Achatz's giddily intellectual food won out—exacerbated by having already plunked down my \$500? Was my response governed by the subtly inverted relationship that the ticket had created? It's hard for me to think that it wasn't.

"Food is, and restaurants are, what we take them to be," Acheson told me. "They are what we walk in believing them to be." What Kokonas offers restaurants seems too compelling not to be with us, in one form or another, for a long time to come. I sincerely hope it makes chefs' and restaurateurs' lives a little better and pays dividends for diners on the plate. But I also hope that he and those who will follow his lead have the brains and imagination not to disrupt something too delicate to appear on a spreadsheet or chart: what it feels like to eat in a great restaurant.

In return, let's make a pact, you and I: *Don't fucking no-show*. It is rude, it takes real money from good people, and it opens the door to all manner of mischief.

At a lunch in New Orleans recently, I found myself talking with Ralph Brennan, of the city's legendary Brennan hospitality family. After a few drinks and a dish of eggs Sardou, I brought up the idea of selling tickets to his restaurants. Brennan looked at me as though I had suggested opening a restaurant on Jupiter. "I think that kind of thing fundamentally changes our relationship," he said. "It's no longer me hosting you." But what about no-shows? What about efficiency? Wouldn't it solve a bunch of problems? Now he looked as though the suggestion had been to run the Jupiter restaurant in the nude, singing cabaret songs.

He took a long sip of his Sazerac and said, "But all of that's *my* job."

BRETT MARTIN is a GQ correspondent and the author of the forthcoming book *Fuck You, Eat This*.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 44

to deliver were nurtured by the parents of a celebrity singer. (Gino remains stingy with the names.) Another of SpeedWeed's renowned growers once played a famous police officer on TV. "The first time I met him, I'm doing a \$10,000 deal, buying from him, and I'm like, 'You know, this is freaking me out—I keep expecting you to bust me!'" Gino says.

Gino has nothing to fear from Officer Weedthumbs, of course. In the very near future, SpeedWeed's biggest concern may actually be...other SpeedWeeds. It seems like every month brings another challenger.

Up in San Francisco, weed-delivery company Flow Kana plans to expand to SoCal and beyond. Then there's Eaze, another S.F.-based weed-delivery start-up—run by a former Microsoft executive, no less—that recently raised \$11.5 million from both traditional Silicon Valley venture capitalists and Snoop Dogg's own investment company, Casa Verde Capital. ("Green House Capital," get it?) Eaze is eyeballing SpeedWeed's turf, too. A lot of people are dreaming the same dream as Gino and A.J. Sure, SpeedWeed staked a claim early and boasts twenty-three consecutive months of growth. It has an established brand. It has Joe Rogan! But the company needs more investment money—millions more, and soon—to survive the onslaught.

In California, the new weed economy is fashionable, a hot place to invest, the next big frontier, where the action's at. "Everybody in L.A. wants to be in the cannabis business," Gino says. "Every celebrity I meet, they say, 'Hey, you have to meet this guy I know who grows,' or they know some other guy who wants to invest."

Of course everyone wants in on the game if they look at it from Gino's vantage point. It's all hyper-powered highs and porn stars, miraculously shrunken tumors and Miley Cyrus Instagrams. And this is that rare moment—as with Prohibition's end, or skateboarding's explosion in the '90s—when something rebellious threatens to not just go legit, but billion-dollars legit. You don't need Justin Timberlake channeling Aaron Sorkin to tell you why that's cool.

These green-rush bandwagoners also don't see A.J. back at the bunker, talking to lawyers, writing code, hoping that the money holds and the government backs down soon and that the next delivery nets Chris Cope a good enough tip to keep him from bitching. They don't know that A.J. occasionally pops an Ambien or a cannabis candy at night, to shut off his brain, so he won't just lie in bed awake. But why harsh a good high?

DAN LYONS'S fourth book, *Disrupted: My Misadventure in the Startup Bubble*, will be published next spring.

Pages 76–77. Set design: Todd Wiggins for Mary Howard Studio. Hair: Blake Erik at Jed Root. Makeup: Tracy Murphy at Jed Root. Manicure: Tatyana Molot at ABTP. On Adria, left, bra: Cosabella. Skirt: House of Harlot. Stockings: Wolford. Heels: Pierre Hardy. On Leven, right, dress: Dsquared2. Rings: her own.

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BEST-DRESSED MEN: THE MAYBE-NEXT-YEAR GUYS

--> After poring over thousands of images of potential "Most Stylish" nominees, *GQ* creative director Jim Moore and style editor Will Welch were forced to make tough cuts. These seven guys just missed out, but they're front-runners for 2016



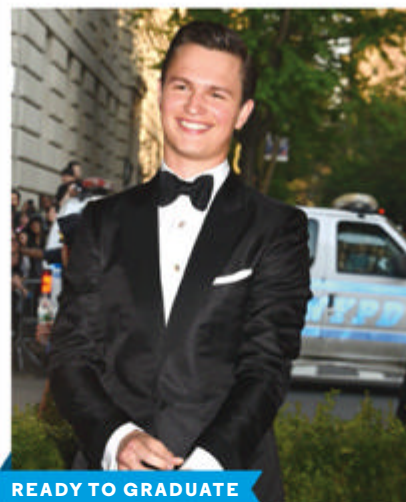
FROM THE BOTTOM, MOSTLY THERE

↑ **Drake:** So good at understanding his own feelings; still figuring out which style moves work best for him.



SWERVE TOO HARD

↑ **Nick Young:** A+ swagger, great smile, hit-or-miss swerves. Next year's goal: Dial back some looks to eliminate the air balls.



READY TO GRADUATE



THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT



SCANDAL: NOT SO STYLISH

↑ **Tom Brady:** Always perfectly put together. Expect him to put on a sideline style clinic during his suspension.



RED CARPET RETRO GOD

↑ **John C. Reilly:** Surprisingly singular style at movie premieres all winter and spring. A dark-horse candidate on the rise.



WE'RE NUMBER TWO! TILL 2016

↑ The style battle among these three Hollywood young guns is as intense as the jockeying among Republican primary candidates. **Ansel Elgort** (top), **Miles Teller** (center), and **Michael B. Jordan** bring it, day in and day out, and they're *this* close to top-class status. Which one will pull everything together this fall and become the Eddie Redmayne of 2016? Maybe all of 'em.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MARK ROBERT MILAN/FILMMAGIC/GETTY IMAGES; AKM-GSI; SPLASH NEWS/CORBIS; NANCY RIVERA/SPLASH NEWS/CORBIS; J. REETZ/SABINE BRAUER PHOTOS/CORBIS; DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP PHOTO

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